On Friendship, Boobs and the Logic of the Catalogue: Online Self-Portraits as a Means for the Exchange of Capital

Ori Schwarz, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract: Mobile photography and the emergence of lay self-portraiture are often interpreted as emancipatory processes of increasing agency and self-revelation. This article challenges this view by examining photos published in online-albums and Social Network Sites (SNSs). Bourdieuvian field analysis is utilised to reveal the local forms of capital which characterise those sites as fields of cultural production. Special attention is given to the enabling function of photos in the exchange between cultural, corporeal and social capital. Unlike both 'home mode' photos aimed for family and friends and professional photos aimed for strangers, photos in SNSs are an instrument aimed at making strangers into friends through their incorporation in a consumerist visual representation of society as a catalogue. Rather than an expression of a reflexively chosen identity, the photos produced by different actors are explained by their corresponding position in the field and composition of capital, as well as by the photos' functionality.

Keywords: photography, self-portraits, corporeal capital, exchange of capital, internet, social network sites, online albums

D., a 16-year-old boy from Tel Aviv, is intensely involved in photography. He takes many photos on a regular basis in sundry situations: at school, with friends, with girls, or alone. However, he is not particularly interested in photography as such. In an interview, he describes his range of subjects as extremely narrow: 'only myself'.

D. is not an exception. Self-portraiture has lately become one of the most popular genres of lay photography. This phenomenon is unprecedented (Walker, 2005): whereas the artistic tradition of self-portraiture goes back to the Renaissance, lay photographers used to photograph their family members, friends and pets rather than themselves. It is also absent from classical accounts of lay photography (Chalfen, 1987; Bourdieu, 1990). Nowadays, millions and millions of self-portraits are published on websites as different as online albums, Social Network Sites (SNSs), dating sites, and blogs. Van House and Davis (2005) found 'a surprisingly large incidence of such
pictures', and their existence was also mentioned by many other scholars (e.g. Hjorth, 2007, Lee, 2005, Horel, 2005). Why do so many people photograph themselves?

Walker explains the emergence of self-portraiture as a response to the technological affordances of the digital camera: 'Digital cameras certainly make taking self-portraits easier than conventional cameras did' (Walker 2005:1). This is almost indisputable (notwithstanding alternative explanations for the emergence of self-portraiture to be presented later). But Walker goes further and interprets self-portraiture as an act of self-revelation, in which the digital eye is turned inward. For her, the technical specifications of digital cameras instantly entice users to experiment with self-exploration, just like mirrors. Self-portraiture is seen as autotelic, and its products and production processes as unaffected by its intended audience. Online publication only empowers the photographers, giving them control over the representation of their own life.

This interpretation is part of a broader trend to view new technologies of self-documentation as emancipating. Many scholars were imbued with optimism by technologies like the camera phone and the Internet, which enable lay people to take photos almost everywhere, at any time, free of charge, and make them available to wide audiences. Like blogs, digital cameras and online albums are widely interpreted as agents of democratisation: the 'everyday people', who used to be passive objects of mass media (Walker, 2005, Slevin, 2000), or women and girls, formerly objects of the 'male gaze' (Lee, 2005), are becoming autonomous subjects and gaining control over the ways in which they're being represented. Mobile Photography is interpreted as a 'symbol in current contestations about individualism, self-expression and social formation in the politics of everyday life' (Hjorth, 2006:8). Both self-documentary photography and its online publication are 'interpreted as a rebellion against social control and as a way of
regaining power over [the photographers'] own lives' (Serfaty, 2004:89). For these scholars, online publication only validates an identity already revealed in the independent stage of photo-production.

What this model lacks are considerations of audience expectations, the logic of fields, or market demands – as if reflexive representations of self are produced under circumstances of artistic freedom, undisturbed by their intended uses, methods of appraisal, power-relations or interests.¹ The emancipation thesis also tends to confuse the eye with the gaze, assuming that since the eye behind the camera belongs to the photographed person herself, photography is no longer subject to any external scopic regime.²

Some scholars have criticised or refined the emancipation thesis. Van House and Davis interpreted digital self-portraiture as self-presentation directed outwards rather than inwards, but still as empowerment for 'influencing how others see us' (2005:3); Lee (2005) and Hjorth (2007) acknowledged that self-portraits often mimic conventions of mass media or stereotypical feminine poses; Cohen (2005) found that production of photos and their online publication reciprocally affect and motivate each other; while Cox (2007) explicitly criticised Walker, rightly claiming that online photographic and textual self-representations are influenced by the wish to 'boost traffic', an aim served by joining 'groups' or commenting on photos of others – thus, the album-sharing website *Flickr* 'encourage[s] users to commodify their own activities' for the interests of the site's operators. However, these are incidental remarks: no systematic alternative explanation for the emergence of self photography, its popularity and its logic-of-operation has been suggested so far.

In this article, I offer such an alternative explanation. Unlike Walker, my stress is less on the changes in the means of production (important as they might be), and more
on the technosocial dynamics of the distribution and consumption stages, i.e. the emergence of new audiences for lay photography. Thanks to Internet-based distribution platforms, vernacular photography is no longer aimed for the limited circle of family and close friends. Hence, the 'home mode' photography (Chalfen, 1987) is replaced by a new mode of production. Basically, we're witnessing a shift from photographing others for self-consumption to documentation of self for consumption by others, in a way that serves the economic interest of the Internet and mobile communication industries that developed these platforms. Rather than stressing the psychological motives for self-portraiture (and without underestimating them), I focus on the social uses of self-portraits, which, I believe, could give a much more plausible explanation, if not for their historical emergence, at least for their current huge popularity. Furthermore, my analysis can also explain some of the main characteristics of contemporary self-portraits.

I will argue that new distribution platforms facilitated the emergence of new fields in the Bourdieuvian sense. Pierre Bourdieu (1992, 1993a) analyses systems of cultural-production as “fields” - semi-autonomous spheres in which social worth is produced and contested. Fields are social games in which agents struggle for different stakes (e.g. money, prestige, artistic qualities and their public recognition) and about which stakes merit a struggle. Fields are also social spaces in which different agents take positions relationally, through strategies like self-differentiation and assimilation. Strategies-of-action within the field (aimed at obtaining either economic capital or field-specific cultural capital) are products of the field's structure, and the agents' habitus, field-positions, and "cards" (i.e. volume and composition of capital).

Bourdieu himself applied Field Theory to cultural production. Bourdieu explored cultural consumption in different publications (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984), using a
different (though not dissimilar) analytic framework, emphasising the relational nature of consumption and taste and their role in producing social distinctions. However, SNSs challenge the traditional distinction between production and consumption in a way typical to lay engagement with new media at large. Contemporary media-users turned into produsers/prosumers who produce and distribute cultural products (photos, graphics and texts), but usually not for material gain: unlike the SNS's operators who gain financial profits from this productive activity, the produsers struggle for different stakes. Since what SNS-users produce and market is representations of themselves, questions of taste and identity (typical to the arena of consumption) are of great import. When the 'homemade spectacle' is incorporated into the 'general media stream' (Kitzmann 2004:45-46), production and consumption merge into each other, broadening the applicability of Bourdieu's field theory.

For Bourdieu, 'each field calls forth and gives life to a specific form of interest, a specific illusio', which is 'implied by one's participation in the game', and 'differentiates itself according to the position occupied in the game' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:117). In order to sociologically understand why people produce self-portraits, we must first ask: what, then, are the interests specific to this field?

The article will explore this question locally, through in-depth analysis of the Israeli SNS Shox as a social-game and of the uses of self-portraiture within it. I'll focus on representations of the body as embedded in the practical context of their social usage (rather than interpreting them as symbolic statements). Theorising these findings, I claim that photos play a major social role in the exchange process between different sorts of capital. More specifically, I contend that in Shox, photos are carriers of corporeal capital (both congenital bodily characteristics and investment in body modifications) and of a specific form of local cultural capital (mastery of advertising-
inspired code of representation). Photos enable certain users to exchange these forms of capital with social capital, both online and offline.

But before delving into the ethnography of Shox, I wish to shortly demonstrate how the very case cited by Walker to demonstrate the 'emancipatory' nature of contemporary self-documentation may be better understood by an analysis more sensitive to the social aspects of self-portraiture and its instrumental roles.

**The instrumentality of the fragmented self**

Walker analysed the female practice of publishing photo-sets of their body-parts on *Flickr* as a process of 'self exploration', which takes place due to the photographers' 'desire' for 'discovering oneself as flesh and blood' through the camera, enabling women to see their bodies from new angles. The photo-set is, allegedly, a representation of a multiple and fragmented postmodern self. Walker de-socialises photography, assuming it's only made for self-consumption. The publication of the sexualised nude photos in a highly-popular website goes unnoticed, while the *Photoshop*-manipulations only 'complete the process of self-exploration'. However, the photos she discussed (by the anonymous photographer Lala-lala) gained thousands of views and dozens of viewer-comments, which compliment Lala-lala both as a photographer (contrast, exposure) and as a body (her 'hot boobs').

*Flickr* may be described as a social space in which users compete for other users' attention (represented by each photo's view-counter); for public recognition of their technical and artistic competence (objectified and perpetuated in the trail of comments beneath each photo, where commentators use either photographic jargon or the metaphorical language of emotions; and in ribbons awarded by elitist user-groups or invitations to join them, offering greater publicity); and even for a specific form of social capital (a web of contacts, objectified in each user's 'contacts list').
In the case of Lala-lala, the naked body guarantees attention to her photographic competence, while the latter (the aestheticisation and cropping) shift the attention back to form, enabling her to avoid accusation of pornography which would have de-legitimised her both as a photographer and as a photographed subject. It also diminishes the risk of being identified offline: when winning in one social game may imply losing in others, contextual boundaries must be maintained.

Lala-lala did choose how to represent herself, and didn't act deterministically. Yet, rather than an answer to the Giddensian question 'who do I want to be' (as suggested by Walker), this choice responded to the logic of the field. Rather than preferring sexuality and mystery to other identity traits, Lala-lala reacted to her possibilities of action in the field, while exploiting her available physical and cultural resources (beauty and knowledge). Undoubtedly, traditional gender roles played a part in constructing the range of strategies available to her.

**What is it good for?**

What are then the uses of self-portraiture among young Israeli? The research I conducted, which included both interviews with Israeli teenagers and young adults and intensive analysis of online materials, found many such uses, including:

(a) allocating potential romantic partners and negotiation over potential romantic ties, in both formal dating-sites, interpersonal interaction via email/Instant-Messaging, and websites not explicitly aimed at dating like SNSs, blogs, and even online-albums (a 29-year-old urban female interviewee could recall dating five men she got to know through their comments on her *Flickr*-photos or vice versa).

(b) publication qua art. People who publish photos online may find a large audience that not only views photos but also appraises them. One might become a successful amateur-artist in the micro-context of a website (e.g. *Flickr*).
(c) acquisition of social status and social ties. In youth subcultures where
models are admired, the ability to produce self representation qua fashion-model
becomes a criterion for status and worth. This is the most surprising usage, to which
most of the article is dedicated.

**Shox, fame and the uses of photography**

What follows is based on an intensive study of the Israeli SNS *Shox*, supported
by data from other SNSs, online-albums and blog-platforms. I have no pretensions of
exhaustively describing the various practices of using photos online, yet the logic
recognised here is at least partly applicable to other online contexts, in Israel and
worldwide. Since the online sphere is more and more integrated in offline lives, a local
study, although its conclusions are harder to generalise, may be the most valid way of
identifying the logic of praxis.

SNSs are websites explicitly aimed at creating and/or maintaining social
relations. The SNSs I discuss here are different from the *Facebook* model (focused on
online social interaction with offline acquaintances and used for maintenance of social
ties: Ellison et al. 2007), and closer to the *Myspace* model (where users produce textual
and visual content in order to create new ties with strangers). Israeli SNSs *Shox, Dex*
and *Café-TheMarker* allocate each user a personal page with her personal-profile. They
also let each user keep an online-diary (blog), have an online-album (SNSs are the final
destination of a high percentage of the photos taken by many Israeli teenagers and
young adults, who upload up to hundreds of photos each to their SNS-albums), conduct
polls among their visitors, and view the diaries and albums of others. However, the main
function of these sites is the formation and maintenance of social contacts, while texts
and photos often become means to this end. Users may use the site to exchange both
private messages and public comments (left on other users’ personal pages). Not less
important, each user has a catalogue of her 'friends', which is the defining characteristic of SNSs' (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Boyd, 2006). A friendship is established once one user proposes friendship to another and the other accepts. My interviewees were chosen among those with large networks of 'friends'.

Shox is predominately populated by teenagers: in December 2007, the median age of its users was 16.³ A random sample reveals that almost all Shox teenage-users publish photos in their personal albums. They publish almost exclusively photos of themselves. Most of these photos are contextless: usually, no other people are seen in the frame. Even when there is another person (a partner or a good friend), those photographed don't do anything, but simply are. Both boys and girls show themselves scantily dressed and posed in ways strongly influenced by advertisements and fashion photography. These photos are often heavily edited with Photoshop, and a lot of effort, time and creativity is devoted to manipulating them. The photos taken by girls are often arms-length images (taken from a high angle, with the girl holding her mobile phone in an outstretched hand above her head). This angle was advantageous both for the production process (it's easier to take a self portrait this way, without having to use a timer) and for the product (accentuating the breasts and hiding the belly). However, this angle also relies on advertisements-iconography which identifies femininity with subordination (Goffman, 1979).

The 'borrowed' cultural model of advertisement also reverberates in the discursive level: when person X is photographed holding a consumer item or any other object Y (usually during a social gathering), the caption will often be 'X modelling Y'. When a successful Shox-user quit the site and criticised it, she argued that users were merely 'modelling their own names', hence they're not the real models they think they are – an attack that shows how common the opposite attitude is. Many users don't only
edit their photos, but also add a 'logo' they design for their name. Some even add logos of fashion brands to their photos, thus making themselves appear as the official models of fashion powerhouses.

The dream of glamour many users share is to be 'discovered' as models, just as was the user Michael Mario Lewis. But even if not discovered, they gain a representation of themselves as attractive and glamorous, which may yield them social gains. Both the statements of my informants, and the commodified, context-free nature of the photos, do not support the interpretation of self-portraiture as self-revelation. Interviewees insisted that in Shox, you can't show who you really are: they didn't want people to learn too much about them from their photos and didn't believe they could learn a lot from the photos of others. Photos and blog-posts should only make you look good and cool. Only few 'friends' will gain access to more personal information, and only later, once trust has been built, usually in Instant-Messaging (IM) communication.

Like other SNSs, Shox borrows some features from dating sites. Each personal-page includes a user-profile, where users are asked to give information on their relationship-status, sexual orientation, height, weight, etc. However, it would be wrong to assume that self-branding and self-marketing is exclusively (or even primarily) aimed at creating romantic relationships. It's rather used intensively and extensively for the establishment of non-romantic social ties with people from both the same sex and the opposite one.

The field-specific interest on which Shox users struggle is stardom, or 'celebrityness': successful users speak of themselves as 'celebrities'. They explicitly strive for popularity and are proud when they achieve it. Like Reality TV, Shox offers universal access to production-means of fame and self-promotion (cf. Andrejevic, 2004). Popularity in Shox is gauged in three ways: number of 'friends' (considered by users as
the main index for social status in *Shox*); number of comments on one's personal page (indicating not only popularity, but also the length of experience on the site); and page traffic (ratings). Photos that endow a user with the aura of an attractive model are extremely helpful in achieving all three.

The function of friend-counts as signs of status explains the effort of many users to collect as many friends as possible much better than 'boredom', or 'just to annoy', motivations cited by Fono & Raynes-Goldie (2007). While friend-collectors in the SNSs *Friendster* and *Myspace* are publicly rebuked as 'whores' (Donath & Boyd, 2004:80; Boyd, 2006), in *Shox* they are admired as 'celebrities'. My interviewees A., Sh. and E. never decline a friendship-request. Two of them admit to being motivated by the wish to increase the exposure of their pages and to appear as socially-successful. Sh. also described declining a proposal as a breach of courtesy (cf. Boyd, 2006, Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Unlike users of other SNSs (Donath & Boyd 2004; Fono & Raynes-Goldie, 2007), *Shox* teenage users aren’t careful about adding 'friends' as if it were a declaration concerning their own self-identity, saying that people seldom look at 'friends' apart from the 12 top-friends shown on each personal page. This applies to most users, apart from a small 'elite' group, whose excluding friending strategy I discuss later.

A comment is a message or a turn in a split conversation (in which each participant comments on the partner's personal-page). Although the site supports personal chat and private messages, users usually prefer public comments. Thus, interpersonal communication turns into gift-exchange. In the sociological tradition (from Marcel Mauss, through Levi-Strauss and Bourdieu, and up to these days), gift-exchange is ascribed an important role in "social alchemy": exchange, veiled as disinterested giving, obliges the receiver to reciprocate; and helps form and ratify social
bonds. Comments function as gifts, both because most comments are compliments, i.e. public recognition of the receiver’s worth; and because (independently of its content) every comment raises the receiver’s comment-count.

Apart from some exceptions discussed later, users who avoided uploading their photographic portraits remained secluded and, having failed to make friends and receive comments, have left the SNS.

Those who did manage to achieve social capital in Shox found that it’s not confined to the site: both unofficial ‘celebrity’-status and official ‘friendship’-ties accompany their bearers in other contexts. When popular Shox users go to a nightclub, they may be recognised by many of the attendants. When they go to an offline-meeting of Shox users, a queue of users will ask them to get photographed together. And not less important, interviewees say that they met many of their closest friends and romantic partners through Shox. While Shox-celebrities instrumentally add dozens of friends only to make themselves look popular and get more views, they also create meaningful ties with some of their Shox-'friends'.

Why are photos so essential for the establishment of social ties on Shox? A high rate of Shox's teenage users do not keep an online-diary on the site, either because they dislike writing, or since this kind of self-exposure might complicate impression-management (both reasons were suggested by the respondents themselves), hence photos function as a main starting-point for stimulating interaction.

Most of the social ties in Shox begin when one party bestows the other with a public user-comment complimenting the receiver's beauty; the second is indebted (counter-gift is here the explicit norm), and expected to return a compliment; a friendship-proposal is sent; and often communication keeps developing (first on IM and later, when trust is established, on the phone). This pattern was both reported by
informants and discernible in comments left on personal pages. Photos are not only used for making acquaintances, but also for their maintenance. Users often upload new and different self-portraits in order to maintain ties and status: not only do they rebrand themselves, they also invite their Shox-'friends' to react by commenting on the photos (occasionally even explicitly demanding it). Thus, investment in self-representation through photographic portrayal may maintain weak relationships as half-dormant, though objectified in a catalogue – a main usage of SNSs (Ellison et al. 2007).

Furthermore, the social hierarchy among Shox teenage users is based on beauty: all popular users interviewed said they're popular since they look good. One informant told me of leaving competing sites to join Shox, due to Shox users' 'higher quality': being asked to explain, he explicated 'they are more beautiful' (demonstrating that choosing the right SNS is a relational act of self-branding). Users believe one has to look good and have good photos in order to acquire many 'friends'. A catalogue of good-looking friends not only bestows high status on its owner, but actually makes the owner seem more attractive to other users (this "assimilation effect" in SNSs, i.e. the effect of friends' attractiveness on a user's attractiveness, was demonstrated by Walther et al. 2008). Pictureless Shox-users are often publicly accused of taking on a false identity or of ugliness. Even users who did publish a few photos may stand under suspicion, until they've proved their identity by participating in an offline Shox-meeting. Some Shox users are preoccupied with uncovering impersonators as a demonstration of good virtual citizenship, defending the social hierarchical order based on beauty.

To conclude, photos are used as (1) a starting-point for conversation; (2) a way to maintain social interaction and status; (3) a means of verifying the identity of others; and (4) an indication of one's beauty, i.e. one's social worth in the context of the site.

Photos as a currency and a technology for exchange of capital
The notion of 'corporeal capital' is now to be introduced. Although Bourdieu was sensitive to the embodied dimensions of capital, his basic typology of forms of capital included neither 'sexual capital' nor 'corporeal capital' or 'bodily capital' (e.g. 1986). This is no surprise, considering his conviction that most bodily characteristics are 'strictly correspondent' to the possession of other forms of capital, hence ('biological accidents apart') reducible to class (1984:193), and might be conceptualised as a mere form of cultural capital, i.e. habitual practices concerning the maintenance and manipulation of the body. Other scholars utilised the concept of corporeal capital only in professional contexts, where bodily capital is convertible to economic capital (e.g. Wainwright & Turner, 2003; Mears & Finlay, 2005). Shilling (1991) suggested that gender theory and structuration theory may refine the 'physical capital' concept. However, the social meaning of non-bourgeois people considered beautiful within their own milieu or beyond it, remained mostly ignored.

Martin and George (2006) expand the Bourdieuvian model in another direction: focusing on sexual desirability, they refuse to take for granted a homology between sexual attractiveness and social status. Instead, they consider sexual capital (which is not merely bodily) to be a specific capital of the sexual field, which is not a mere index for another form of capital. However, Baudrillard's notions of 'beauty as a form of capital' and 'sexual status', which are not necessarily restricted to the sexual field (Baudrillard, 1998), match my findings better. I also heavily draw on Skeggs' brilliant conceptualisation of femininity as 'one of the forms of cultural capital to which working-class women have access' (2001:298), even if accessible only to those who have the right physicality. Those are able to utilise it to accrue high material and symbolic rewards in arenas like marriage. However, investment in femininity is simultaneously devalued in other arenas (as the labour market and the education
When you have restricted access to small amounts of capital, femininity may be better than nothing at all, although this investment is delegitimised, and 'working-class women are positioned as immoral and tasteless because of their concern with appearance, one of the only forms of cultural capital on which they can draw' (Skeggs, 2001:305).

When I speak of 'corporeal capital', it is in Skeggs' sense of investment in physicality as a capital which promises access to power in some spheres but brings about delegitimisation in others. Unlike Martin and George's concept, mine is not confined to the sexual field and remains highly relevant elsewhere. Unlike Skeggs, I prefer not to subsume it under “cultural capital”: although particular (culturally-modified) bodies are marks of distinction used by the dominant classes, in a culture that so strongly identifies the body as material, natural, “low”, and anti-cultural, explicitly investing in and capitalising on the body and its representation have quite different implications from other sorts of cultural investment. Since not fully reducible to other forms of capital, “corporeal capital” requires a distinct term.

Based on the ethnography of Shox, I suggest that:

1) **Self-portraits are carriers of a specific sort of corporeal capital.** This capital may draw on a) congenital bodily characteristics; b) bodily-modifications, i.e. manipulations executed on the body: diet, fitness, piercing, hairdo, cloths; c) manipulation on the representation of the body, achieved through posing, shooting angles, camera effects, Photoshop manipulations, etc. – mastery of visual codes, mostly borrowed from the advertising and fashion industries. I find 'corporeal capital' a suitable term, since it is embodied in the virtual body, which is understood as indexical of the physical body. Thus, representations of the body function as a social currency (even if they can only partly be drawn back to physicality).
While trying to gain popularity through photos, different users choose different sorts of representation, corresponding to their different resources: there are 'transparent' photos, which try to present the body in a more natural fashion, implying authenticity and credibility by avoiding any obvious manipulation; alongside highly edited photos, which rely on local, age-group-related cultural capital (photography, photo-editing and styling skills) no less than on corporeality per se. Both attitudes are practised by boys and girls alike. It must be noted that mastery of this photographic code is not part of legitimate ("high") culture, but it does function as a means of social exclusion – thus corresponding to what Lamont and Lareau (1988) described as 'marginal high status signal', i.e. the local cultural capital of dominated classes and class-fractions. However, it is capital in the sense of 'powers that define the chances of profit in a given field', 'like the aces in a game of cards' (Bourdieu, 1985:724).

(2) While designating photos as 'carriers of capital', I imply that photos are an investment and that they possess a degree of convertibility. Indeed, Shox users exchange this sort of corporeal capital for social capital: their capacity to make friends through the site depends greatly on having the right photos. This form of corporeal capital is not only relevant in the romantic/sexual context (For this reason, I did not designate it as 'sexual capital'): for most Shox users, it's an organising criterion for social hierarchies at large. Shox users initiate social ties of all kinds by commenting on photos, mainly on the body as reflected in self-portraits. They use and create catalogues of photos which function as a visual representations of social systems in general.

(3) This usage not only explains the preference for self-portraits, but also determines to a high degree the style of those portraits, what is shown in them, and more
importantly, what is *not* (one is tempted to follow the informants and say 'and cannot be') shown, namely contextualised documentary photos rich in personal information.

(4) The field metaphor implies relational positioning. And indeed, the practice of utilising photos for exchange of capital is age- and class-specific. For a minority group inside *Shox*, consisting of older and more educated users to be discussed later, it became a mark of delegitimation, identifying one as belonging to the lower ranks of the social hierarchy. Members of this group use photos to initiate social and romantic contacts, but they do not produce photos which explicitly expose this intention. Thus, styles of self-portraiture are marks of distinction.

*Shox’s* visual economy is thus based on conversion between different forms of capital, (cf. Bourdieu, 1986): corporeal capital (manifested in bodily features) and local cultural capital (the knowledge needed to produce a conventionalised photo, including technical mastery of camera and graphic software as well as mastery of the relevant aesthetic codes and conventions) are materialised and objectified as photos, which, in turn, are convertible into social capital, i.e. social ties and status. The volume of social networks created by the most successful users – thousands of ‘friends’ from different geographic locations, dozens of them in contact on a regular basis – demonstrate the efficacy of this currency.

*Shox* offers us a good example of the way young people use self-portraits in SNSs, which may explain why so many such portraits are produced and hint at the broader social meaning of this practice. Some ethnographic data will be presented to demonstrate this model.

**Everybody says Hello**

L., an 18-year-old girl from a small town who left *Shox* after achieving tremendous success (935 friends), described one of the social mechanisms through
which this conversion of capital takes place. Her description is based on first-hand experience, even if presented from a critical rhetorical stance. Her outlook is consistent with those of my informants and of other reflexive texts written by Shox users. According to L., photos are used in Shox as an entrée for social interaction: they are a starting point for an exchange of compliments, in which users compliment each other's bodies, not necessarily because they find each other beautiful, but rather calculatedly, in order to receive a compliment in return and establish an acquaintance: 'and then [he] will see me at the Silver [a dancing club], and then he'll say hello to me, and then I'll be so cool, because pathetic ugly guys will be approaching me one by one to say hello'. Similarly, D. told me that when he goes clubbing, he knows almost everybody in the club from Shox. Without photos, it would not only be almost-impossible to achieve online social-capital within the SNS (i.e. a large group of 'friends', many complimenting comments, etc.), but it would be just impossible to convert this social-capital to the offline world. When a 14-year-old girl comments on a 16-year-old boy's personal page 'I'd do you if you weren't taken, and if I weren't', it should not be misunderstood as an indecent proposal, but rather as a symbolic bestowal of status. In spite of the explicit language, it's not about sex or any “sexual field”, but about recognition of social worth. This explains why sexualised photos (which might evoke compliments) are not less common among users who described their status as romantically unavailable; and why many heterosexual users compliment users from the same sex for their body (a custom more common among girls, who are less afraid of being stigmatised as homosexual).

A., a popular Shox user (M, 17), told me in an interview that he often compliments plain girls, with the hope they'll choose him among the top-12 'friends' shown on their personal pages, thus bringing more viewers to his personal profile-page.
His friend E. (M, 19) preferred to avoid gross lies and give them lukewarm compliments like 'cute'.

The strategy presented by L. is extremely common, even if not always as a conscious, calculated manipulation. Most comments in Shox refer to users' beauty as seen in their self-portraits. This is especially true for popular users. Some comments consist of compliments alone, while others add conversation-starters ('what's up, pretty one?' - also to same-sex heterosexual users), explicit requests to 'keep in touch', or concrete proposals for online or offline communication (instant-messaging, clubbing, etc.). My interviewees described exchanging bodily compliments as the necessary first step in social-relations, while replying to all comments is necessary if one wishes to become popular. This means a great investment of time: A. spends 5-6 hours daily on Shox (though multi-tasking), replying ca. 150 comments daily.6

Hodkinson (2007) explains the positive comments as a norm deriving from the status of the SNS personal page as a 'private space'. I'd like to stress the logic of the game, where what's at stake is forming multiple social ties, rather than demonstrating criticism or brilliance. The predominantly positive character of comments on Shox is characteristic of SNSs worldwide: among the teenage users of a Dutch SNS, 77.7% responded they received only or predominantly positive comments (Valkenburg et al., 2006). This stands in a sharp contrast to 'portfolios' sites, like the Israeli Shakel – which consists only of personal-pages showing self-portraits, comment-sections and rating system, with no social networking features. Where no social capital can be accumulated, the exchange patterns discussed here lose their purpose, and brutal hostile comments flourish.

As L. claims, online status on Shox can be converted into offline status, and vice versa. When 15-year-old girl 'Little N.' met a boy in a dance-club, another boy she had
already known told her 'don't you know him? It's E.D., one of the most popular on
Shox'. She wrote the anecdote in a comment in E.D.'s personal page, asking if he
recognised her. She recognised him as 'celebrity-like', and asked him to recognise her as
an acquaintance in return, in an exchange that traverses the alleged boundaries between
online and offline. This translation into the offline-world sets high normative
requirements: users expect their 'friends' to recognise them in offline encounters. Many
fail to do so (and are reproached for it), what can be easily understood in cases like that
of one 16-year-old girl who failed to recognise one of her 765 Shox-'friends'. Popular
users told me they usually pretend to recognise their 'friends'.

This 'translation' is also done institutionally at offline national/regional 'Shox-
meetings', spontaneously organised by users who publicly invite all users for a meeting
(usually in Tel-Aviv's biggest mall). In those meetings, users not only talk with one
another and verify the 'real' appearance of other users, but also have themselves
photographed together. Popular users sometime feel obliged to be photographed with
many others, who may use these photos as their avatars. This reifies their status as
celebrities, but at the same time makes them lose control over their representation (E.
even asked a girl who had published such a bad photo of him to remove it).

Making friends and the Logic of the Catalogue

Home mode photos and videos (Chalfen, 1987; Moran, 2002) are aimed for
family and friends, whereas mass media communication is aimed for strangers.
However, the communication that takes place in SNSs is of a different mode: it's aimed
for strangers with the explicit intention of turning them into friends (in one sense or
the other). Unlike Meyrowitz's 'media friends' (the one-sided intimacy with TV-stars;
1985:118f.), Shox friendships are mutual and interactional. This mode might well be
called “the Network Mode”.
As suggested by Moran (2002), unlike genres, “modes” are not defined by the aesthetics of their products, but rather by their uses, social functions, and economic relations of production. In the “network mode”, images have a transformational role in the social field: they establish communication paths between nodes, producing and reproducing social networks. More than being mere promotionalist self-advertisements, they are conversation pieces, necessary starters for the exchange of compliments-qua-gifts, which enable not only the formation of relations, but also their maintenance.

After having established that photos are an inevitable ingredient of the scopic economy of recognition in SNSs, the organising principle of social relations in SNSs may be approached. In SNSs, friends are made according to the logic of the catalogue. This logic is apparent in the architecture of sites like Shox, both in the ‘friends lists’ which are centrally located in the users' personal profile-pages; and in the site's search engine, where search queries produce catalogues of users who satisfy the search-criteria (e.g. age, sex, place of residence). In both search-results and friend-lists, any user is represented by her nickname and an avatar (usually a self-portrait).

Interestingly, this logic is not limited to contexts where it's predetermined by the site's architecture: many users creatively reproduce the logic of the catalogue, for instance, while using their blogs to publish catalogues of the people closest to them among their group of 'friends'. The catalogues offered by the site's architecture are egalitarian: one can be included or excluded, but once included one is equal to all. 12 friends are shown on one's personal profile-page and may be cumbersomely chosen, but their fixed number is a constant source of social drama (Boyd, 2006). In order to introduce hierarchy and personalisation, users publish in their blogs additional catalogues of up to a few dozens of friends, each with a short caption (e.g. 'a real man',

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'you're not a friend, you're a real sister'), even though this act prompt bitter resentment among those omitted.

The logic of the catalogue represents the stress on visuality in our consumerist-culture, which privileges sight in the sensual experience of choosing. It represents people as multiple choices, like products of different brands seen synchronically one besides the other on the shelf, a visual economy of abundance. As Illouz noticed, this logic was adopted by dating-sites, with grave consequences on romance: the Internet enables one to 'visualise the market of potential partners. Whereas in the real world, the market of partners remains virtual – never seen, only presupposed and latent – on the Net, the market is real and literal, not virtual, because Internet users can actually visualise the market of potential partners' (Illouz, 2007:87). She further claims, 'No technology I know of has radicalised in such an extreme way the notion of the self as a "chooser"' (Illouz:79). This logic operates beyond the boundaries of the Net: a female 31-year-old Tel-Avivian told in her SNS-blog of keeping a photo-catalogue of about a dozen men out of 24 she dated last year, 'in case I have second thoughts.'

As this article demonstrates, the logic of the catalogue did not only rationalise romance: it colonised and revolutionised the social sphere at large. The SNS social catalogue is the culmination of a historical process portrayed by Wernick (1991:181-197), in which, as a result of a new abundance in potential partners for romance and friendship, which have created a quasi-market, subjects became more aware of their own image, and started to instrumentally promote themselves as sign-commodities, following the market demands. Hearn (2008) contends that such self-branding practices 'delimit the field of possibilities within which any imagined “authentic self” might be performed, reducing the self to a set of purely instrumental behaviours and circumscribing its meanings within market discourse' (Hearn,2008:206). I prefer to avoid any a-priori naïve concept of authenticity as a true disinterstedness. I'm also not sure whether Shox "delimits" self-
presentation possibilities any more than it widens their range. However, it surely remoulds patterns of self-presentation and friending, in what may be seen as utilisation of new technologies by the imperialism of the consumerist paradigm.

SNSs are both environments in which new ties are formed and visual public displays of these connections (Donath & Boyd 2004). Visual representations of social relations are not a contemporary invention (one may think of medieval clusters of coats-of-arms). But the Shox catalogues function differently: not only do they represent/stabilise social relations, they also facilitate consumption. Self-portraits are aimed at making the viewer double-click them and arrive at the personal page of the person photographed. This is an interest of both those photographed, who want to attract potential viewers/readers/friends, and of the site-operators, who want to increase users' time spent on the website and numbers of page-views in order to maximise its advertising revenues. Sites are planned so as to allow both interests to converge: just like the Reality-TV participants discussed by Hearn, Shox-users are not only unpaid labourers working for the site-operators, but also image-entrepreneurs who brand their own presonae and strive for fame, a convertible capital (cf. Hearn, 2006:619, 623).

To conclude, through the photographic representation, one is incorporated into different catalogues that represent one's embeddedness in social networks of 'friends'. Although other sorts of avatars exist, Shox teenagers predominantly use self-portraits and change them regularly, thus "re-branding" themselves as a self-marketing strategy - for it is these catalogues of avatars (both friends-lists and search-results), from which users choose with whom to communicate while searching for new 'friends'. Network-Mode photography is thus interwoven with promotional strategies in which social relations are organised by consumerist catalogues.

**Differentiation and Habitus**

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This pattern – publication of sexualised high-angle self-portraits in order to make friends – is a practice identified with a specific group of agents, a specific position. Who would publish sexualised self-portraits? Following Martin and George, since 'sexual capital' is supposed to be specific to the sexual field, one would expect this strategy to be taken by those searching for romantic/sexual mates and avoided when sexual partners are not desired. However, this proved false: Many girls and boys profess being in a relationship and dedicate much of their personal profile-pages to praise their partner, yet they keep publishing sexualised ad-like self-portraits. Rather, it seems that this strategy is usually taken by those lacking in (legitimate) cultural capital – those already stigmatised as tasteless (and for girls – also as immoral) by more educated, affluent and grown-up users. For these reasons (following Skeggs), they find in their (re-presented) body a last resort in the virtual sphere, where identity is mostly reduced to either textual or photographic representations.

Shox-users produced many reflexive texts concerning Shox-usership, its subdivisions and identity-politics. According to these texts, high-angle revealing self-portraiture is highly identified among the Shox-user-base with a specific position in the field, corresponding to specific age and educational backgrounds.

A minority group in Shox was characterised by relatively older ages (20-30), wide cultural education, and preference for text over photos. This group was unique, in some of its members' success in creating wide 'friends' networks without publishing any photos of themselves: their identity and its credibility and appeal were anchored by textual pegs alone. Their comments were also less often anchored in photos and the body: bodily compliments were replaced by compliments on 'artistic'/design achievements and by excited comments by users discovering taste and lifestyle affinities with the writer. However, I don't suggest any strictly-essentialist definition for this
group. Rather, I recognise its existence following both reflexive texts written by Shox-users and its 'density' (see Granovetter, 1973).

When one of the group members, a Shox-newbie, published a self-portrait taken from a high angle, she received an untypically hostile comment. The photo by S., a 25-year-old female photography student in a prestigious art academy, showed only her hair and a small part of her tank-top shirt, bursting out from the darkness. Like Lala-lala, S. probably used the photo to display both her technical skills (praised by commentators on her other photos) and her attractive body. She succeeded in creating this effect on the first (male) commentators, who wrote: 'S., nice breast, but a tripping (masrita) photo… it recalls illustrations of unpleasant things that perverts do to girls from time to time…'. S. approved the comment as revealing her original intention. Unlike Lala-lala and many Shox-teenagers, S. wore normative clothes. Yet, within a few days (and a few comments complimenting her breasts), S. was accused by a female commentator of using her body to attract 'repulsive' attention. Not coincidentally, the accuser O. was younger than the typical elite-group members: her marginal position within the elite-group surely made her more sensitive to the group's boundaries. S. replied by framing her behaviour as a sex-neutral, professional attitude, admitting that 'the photograph surely is supposed to attract attention', but just 'like any photograph taken by any photographer'.

The story of this photo may be explained by the fact that S. joined Shox only a few days before its publication. As a newcomer, she (1) had to find creative ways of establishing social capital ex nihilo and (2) was not yet intimately familiar with the field in which she was engaged and with the correspondencies of certain practices with specific positions in the field.

The conventionalised photos were used by one users' group as a stimulus for making acquaintances, whereas the avoidance of them helped another group to
differentiate itself from dubious neighbours. Some of S.'s 'friends' avoided photos altogether, while others published contextualised photos (usually from social gatherings) or art-photos (of non-human objects), but no posed "fashion photos".

S.'s photo was one step too close to the "vulgar" practice, hence socially, morally and ideologically suspicious (the interpretation she publicly gave to the photo attempted to reply to such suspicions by re-framing the photo as a feminist act). S. studied art, but at least in Shox, sexualised self-portraits were too strongly identified with their social uses to be accepted as art.\(^9\) Few members of the "elite" group did succeed in making their body visible without blurring the group's boundaries or delegitimising themselves, but they used a self-aware parody of the vulgar practice, which unlike S.'s newcomer tactic, displayed intimate familiarity with Shox. These few photos, with no artistic pretensions, received positive, light-hearted comments: no-one could have blamed them for hidden motives behind a high-brow disguise. Instead of threatening the group's boundary, they strengthened them with sarcasm.

These boundaries and their visual representations were extremely sensitive at the time. Many members of S.'s group left Shox a few months after the affair portrayed above, and moved (as a group-immigration, in a short time-interval) to the competing SNS, Dex. This immigration was (at least partly) a reaction to what they considered a "takeover" of the site by (provincial) teenagers. Their reaction was not unlike middle-class populations emigrating from a neighbourhood after working-class or ethnic-minorities populations moved in, threatening both the neighbourhood's image and land value. For, just like their individual users, SNSs are also relatively-positioned within the field as high/low, young/old, etc. (cf. Boyd, 2007). While criticising their neighbours, Shox "elite" members often mentioned young girls who published self-portraits in revealing clothes. K., for example, passionately criticised 14-year-old girls who
photograph themselves 'armed with push-up and make-up', with 'trousers so low, one can see their ovaries'. Another user (M., 34) felt 'ashamed' to read a newspaper article on *Shox* teenage girls' substandard language and shared thoughts of leaving the site.

Part of the “elite” group boundaries work was a different friending strategy, sharply contrasting the indiscriminate accumulation of friends portrayed above. Shortly after joining *Shox*, S. was proud and 'excited' to have dozens of 'friends', but shortly later she became more concerned about her 'friends' quality and "purged" at least 52 of them. This is an elitist pattern of exclusion: for S. and her sub-network, friend lists were 'imagined egocentric communities' which enabled them to 'locate themselves culturally'; functioned as contextual frames for the establishment of social ties; and helped them restrict their intended audience (Boyd, 2006). It seems probable that when S. deleted 40 'friends' over only two days in March 2006, replacing them with 23 new 'friends', she actually got rid of those not related to the group, deviating from its norms, etc., while adding friends-of-friends, thus anchoring her online identity in the group. My hypothesis is supported by the very high density (0.37) of S.'s network once purged (i.e. the number of 'friendship'-ties in S.‘s egocentric network, divided by the ratio of possible ties: Granovetter, 1973), while a core "effective network" of 39 of her 48 friends had a phenomenal 0.486 density value, indicating a cohesive community with strong ties.

Data from other Israeli SNSs indicates that the tendency to avoid revealing self-portraits and intensive self-portraiture in general is not only a function of age, but also of interest in "high culture" (as demonstrated though the act of joining "discussion communities").

Using the body may delegitimise users in the authoritative sphere of high-culture, and thus may be a calculated rational choice to avoid it. But it seems more
probable, that users are affected by deeper personal dispositions: feelings of shame and abhorrence are more than a tactical choice. Different representations correlate with different habitus: the photos published by highly-educated young adults on Flickr or Shox are contextualised (like in traditional photo-albums) or artistic. Even if consciously aimed at forming social ties, constituting a self-marketing technique, they always deny and conceal their logic of operation. M., who formed many friendly and romantic relationships through Flickr, manipulated every single photo with Photoshop, so she wouldn't make herself or any of her friends look bad in a public arena. However, unlike Shox's teenagers, her Photoshop manipulations cannot be discerned at first glance. All of her photos are contextualised, rather than mimicking fashion photography, and self-portraits comprise only a small minority. According to Goffman (1959), for a performance to be taken for real, it has to conceal its contrived nature. However, this does not apply for Shox youth, since what their performance tries to demonstrate is a mastery of the very ability to make performance. Those Shox users rich in cultural-capital would have too much to lose from such a self-representation, which will almost undoubtedly present them as tasteless or shameless, distancing their similars. However, most probably, many of them did not exclude this possibility after a utilitarian calculation; rather, the possibility did not even cross their mind: their habitual internalised dispositions made them feel embarrassment, even repulsion, from the mere viewing of such photos in the albums of others. Eventually, these feelings of shame of their neighbours were strong enough to make them emigrate.

S. herself was one of the initiators of an emigration wave from Shox to Dex in late 2006. But even earlier, in August, she posted a protest blog-post against the over-emphasis given to scantily-dressed models and teenage girls on Shox's homepage, stating this exposure should rather be given to those more deserving of it, namely: 'high-
quality' writers and photographers like herself, 'relatively anonymous users, who seem to have certain writing or photography skills (and I don't mean [photographing] themselves in knickers) or any other skill this site is supposed to encourage'. She accused the site operators of legitimising 'anyone who had himself photographed in knickers in front of the mirror', and claimed that 'this site, which wants to brand itself as fresh and young, blurs the lines from time to time, and appears to be silly and tasteless'. Indeed, according to Shox's policy, only users who publish self-portraits have a chance of being exposed in Shox's homepage, a privilege that raises one's ratings dramatically, if only for a short while.\footnote{In a field were status depends on body representations rather than cultural skills, S. and her 'friends' had little to gain, apart from delegitimation. Their emigration was almost unavoidable.}

As demonstrated above, among most teenage Shox-users, text (apart from conversation-like textual interaction) played a minor role. Most of them were not involved in intense blogging, or preferred to blog on a different platform. The prevailing ethos among Israeli teenagers (not only on Shox) is strongly anti-intellectual. The word 'digging' (Hebrew slang for writing or talking too extensively, reflexively or deeply) is a common accusation, which might even be directed at a 70-word-short post. This ethos is defined relatively to and against legitimate (school) culture, and carried mostly by those who don't master it. Shox users know the site is stigmatised, and at least some of them avoid alternative sites, which they believe are made for 'those with a bit of head between their ears', demonstrating 'knowing one's place'.

One indeed should be aware of the objectivist character of this explanation: subjectively, teenagers deprived of cultural capital do not find using portraits for building social ties any worse than using texts, and do believe that social hierarchy should be organised on the basis of beauty. Some Shox "stars", especially those who
dropped out of school but succeeded greatly on the site (and used it as a substitute strategy for forming social ties), have an obvious interest in taking this stance. Nonetheless, they're aware of the delegitimating effect of these photos, even in their own standards: one interviewee sharply criticised boys who published topless self-portraits as “miserable” and cheap, blind to the fact that he himself published such photos. Other described girls who publish sexualised photos as 'cheap' and 'pathetic'. Yet, since the virtual sphere offers great opportunities for accumulation of social capital, and since it reduces identity to either textual or photographic representations, many find in their body a last resort.

Conclusions

As I demonstrated, in SNSs the categories of audience and producers almost perfectly collapse into one another. Users consume each other and produce self-documentary texts (blogs) and photos which are incorporated in a complex system of exchange: within the SNS (a view for a view, a comment for a comment) and outside it (in mutual recognition in both initiated and incidental encounters, which, being acted in front of an audience, has a strong performative dimension).

Among a specific group of teenagers with low levels of legitimate cultural-capital, whose ethos is anti-intellectual and fame-adoring, self-portraits function as a currency, indexical of both corporeal and local cultural capital, and convertible with social capital online and offline alike. Social hierarchies are based on the production and marketing of photographic self-representation. New ways of making-friends privilege the catalogue as a model for sociability, in which social relations are objectified and organised by visual consumption and self-promotion through self-spectacularisation (cf. Hearn, 2006). Rather than by consumption (as in Bourdieu, 1984), distinctions are made here by the production of representation-of-self as an artefact to be branded and
marketed. The target-audience, specific segments of the SNS's user-base, are not mere consumers, but the would-be-members of the user's (virtual) social community, publicly displayed as a catalogue of thumbnail-photos on her personal profile-page: those whose status rub off on her and vice versa, some of which may become her true friends. Those whose self-presentation strategies failed to incorporate themselves in a community to which they would like to belong, usually leave the SNS within a short period. They are the losers, those who failed to play the game.

However, extracting value from your own body is a risky game: it may easily end in delegetimation. Even living in the same virtual neighbourhood with Shox teenage-users was eventually too much for others, who created small, carefully chosen social networks, through verbal means. As Skeggs suggested, capitalising on appearance is worthwhile only to those who have no other forms of cultural capital on which they can draw. Due to the logic of the catalogue, at least for most actors on Shox, photos are almost indispensable playing pieces.

Agents do not use photos arbitrarily, or as a result of a reflection on the question 'who do I want to be', as if they freely chose a unitary identity, independent of its context of operation. Their design attempts to achieve local-interests like views, 'friends' and comments, following the logic of the field and based on their lack of other resources, rendering corporeality a main resource. Rather than self-expression, self-portraits in SNSs have a new role: the generation of interaction with strangers in the Network Mode. Photos are anchors that enable and invite "phatic communion" as defined by Malinowski, which 'serve to establish bonds of personal union between people' and establish sociability (Malinowski, 1966:313-316). Photos are thus productive: not only do they produce value for both the user qua image-entrepreneur and the site-operators (cf. Hearn, 2008), they also produce sociability, social bonds,
channels of gift-exchange, and standards for social hierarchisation and organisation.

Economies and technologies of distribution are thus accountable for the rise of self-portraiture no less than are technologies of production.

**Endnotes**

1 For critique of the de-socialisation of cultural production see Bourdieu, 1993, as well as the works of Alfred Gell, Paul DiMagio and many others.

2 However, as Lee herself conceded (and contrary to her emancipation thesis), camera-phone self-portraits taken by girls reproduce patriarchal feminine stereotypes. The gaze is both interiorised by the female self-portraying subject and reproduced by the assumed demands of a male target-audience.

3 65% of the users are registered as 14-17 years old, and only 9% as 21 years old or more. These values are only approximate, since the data includes non-active users (artificially raising the median age). Only reasonable ages (7-50) were taken into account.

4 Actually, Lewis worked as a model before joining Shox, but his SNS-page undoubtedly boosted his career, brought him a wave of fandom, and most importantly, strengthened the belief in Shox's power to create celebrities.

5 One short remark on beauty as a ‘physical capital’ that may lead to upward mobility among working-class girls is found in Bourdieu, 1993b:127

6 One teenage blogger on a different platform quit after her success turned the obligation to respond to each comment into too heavy a burden. She apologised to those who commented without being reciprocated, “*those who commented on my last post and the one before, since I know that's why you comment – to have me commenting on yours D: well, just kidding*, she wrote, jokingly exposing one of the “best-kept and worst-kept” secrets, in Bourdieu's wording. cf. n.12

7 This leakage between online and offline reality is obviously more salient in online communities whose members live in the same region; however, it is not particular to Israeli websites: cf. Hodkinson, 2007.

8 Similarly, K. (19) begged her blog-readers to consider her one of them, the 'high-quality geeks', rather than identify her with the wrong group, although she published (too) many self-portraits and sporadically used substandard language

9 Furthermore, an appropriate object for art-photos inside the art academy is not necessarily appropriate outside it. In Israeli SNSs and photoblogs, the notion of "art photos" is strongly identified with conventionalised pictorialist photos of non-human objects considered inherently beautiful, e.g. flowers [typical of relatively-low levels of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984:18-62, 1990:89)], while humans are reserved for non-artistic lay-photography.
I examined users of *Dex* and *Café-TheMarker*, since allocating a large group of teenage users with explicit interest in high culture among *Shox* users proved difficult. For teenagers, *Shox* offered only one model. Some teenagers tried to oppose it, but eventually had to conform or leave.

Links to the profiles of those mentioned in *Shox*’s homepage also appeared on the popular website of *Ma'ariv*, the second largest Israeli newspaper, which belongs to the same business group as *Shox*.

There is much evidence that this logic is not unconscious. For instance, a 12-year-old female *Shox* user sharply criticised kids who use their comments to explicitly request comment. She claimed it's obvious that if they commented on somebody's page, they'll receive comments in return. cf. n.6

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