Everyday Life Interactions of Women 60+ with ICTs: Creations of Meaning and Negotiations of Identity

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Abstract. How do women 60+ use and ascribe meaning to "new" and "old" information and communication technologies such as cell phones, the Internet, computers, TV, and radio? To investigate this question, life-graph discussions, walking interviews in small domestic spaces, and semi-structured interviews with Austrian women aged 60–70 have been conducted. The analysis of the material collected has shown that both generation-specific experiences of media usage and individual biographical backgrounds influence the use of and ascription of meaning to ICTs. However, ICT usage does not only reflect collective generational experiences and individual biographical circumstances. ICTs are also actively used by women 60+ to creatively shape their identities as women and older adults. Thus, this paper discusses processes and strategies of identity negotiations of women 60+ in the context of ICTs, and explores how everyday life interactions with ICTs can be interpreted as a means of resistance against normative assumptions such as ageist stereotypes.

Keywords: Women 60+ · ICT experiences · Everyday life · Identity · Generations

1 Introduction

In Austria, as well as in Europe in general, age-related differences in terms of usage of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are well documented by empirical findings [1, 2]. Examining the data of Statistics Austria [1] regarding Internet usage by Austrians of different age groups more closely, one can moreover identify an intersectional digital divide, as not only age is statistically related to usage of the Internet, but also gender. Significant differences in Internet usage between older men and women can for instance be identified looking at the numbers of Austrians who in 2014 indicated to have never used the Internet. While almost every third Austrian man (roughly 31%) aged between 55 and 74 indicated to have never used the Internet, almost every other woman of the same group (roughly 47%) stated the same [1]. These intersectional digital divides are problematic, because digital platforms and services not only provide entertainment and opportunities for private communication, but are increasingly promoted as tools for the organization of life in general by political bodies such as the European Union [3, for example]. People who do not use digital communication technologies such as the Internet are at risk of being excluded on various societal levels [4].

Thus, a current empirical study of the research project "Cultural Narratives of Age and Aging" at the Center for Inter-American Studies of the University of Graz, supported by funds of the Österreichische Nationalbank (Anniversary Fund, project no. 15849) explores processes of ascription of meaning to and strategies of use of various information and communication technologies (and particular 'new' ones, such as the Internet) by older women, a group that is being marginalized on the "digital spectrum" [5, p. 5] in the Austrian context. The project aims at understanding lifetimes of experiences with various information and communication technologies and how these past media biographies relate to older women's contemporary everyday life experiences with ICTs. As previous results of analyses conducted within the frameworks of this empirical study have shown [6], both generationally-framed media experiences in terms of a sense of "belonging" within time – in Heinz Bude's [7, p. 28] concept of generational experiences – and, in turn, individual biographic backgrounds, influence the use of and ascription of meaning to ICTs. Both collective reference points in terms of "media generations" [8, 9] and "generation-specific media practice cultures" – as Burkard Schäffer [8] termed practices that are particularly prominent among certain cohorts – and very personal and individual biographical contexts (e.g. work experiences), leisure interests (e.g. sports, music) and world views (spiritual beliefs, political opinions), influence older women's engagement with ICTs. Older women's interactions with ICTs in everyday life thus need to be understood as creative *interplays* of generational and individual experiences and interpretations thereof [6], as Christina E. Buse has also illustrated in her study on computer technologies and embodiment in later life [10].

However, ICT usage does not only reflect collective generational experiences and individual biographical circumstances, but information and communication technologies are also being *actively used* by older women to narrate their lives and thus negotiate their identities as members of social groups – families, communities, and society at large. Although a substantial percentage of studies in the context of seniors' interactions with ICTS primarily focuses on how ICTs can be used to "enhance" older peoples' lives, in terms of cognitive performance, connectivity, or life satisfaction [for example, 11–13], an increasing body of scholarly literature is emerging which highlights agency and creative potentials of older adults in their engagement with ICTs. There are numerous examples of such studies, among them works of Buse [10, 14], Kim Sawchuk and Barbara Crow [15, 16], Loredana Ivan and Shannon Hebblethwaite [17], Andrea Rosales and Mireia Fernández-Ardèvol [18]. This paper intends to contribute to this growing body of critical scholarly literature by examining how older women in Austria creatively engage with ICTs in everyday life and through these interactions negotiate their identities.

2 Method

Participants of this empirical study are women aged 60–70 years of different social backgrounds, residing in the Austrian province of Styria. The study thus focuses on women of the third age (young-old) [19, p. 9]. One assumption of this study is that generational factors, in terms of "historical location" [20, p. 137] as well as "historical participation" [20, p. 140] or "generation location" [21] influence usage of and ascription

of meaning to ICTs across the life course. Thus, the age range of participants was limited to the age 60–70 years in order to create a somewhat comparable group in terms of a 'technology generation,' a concept denominating measurable cohort effects in relation to technology [22]. In Austria, the Internet became more widespread in the early 2000s [23]. Thus, women participating in the study are all likely to have been similarly confronted with decisions on (non-)adoption of new technologies, such as the Internet, both in their professional working environments and/or careers as family care workers, either on a discursive or practical level.

In terms of empirical methods, the study employs a three-part-methodology consisting of life-graph discussions [for an example, see 24] focusing on media biographies, semi-structured sit-down interviews, and "walking interviews in small domestic spaces" [25], all conducted at the same day at the home of the participant. All conversations are being recorded digitally. While the life-graph discussions are being used to biographically frame the conversations between interviewee and interviewer right from the start, the semi-structured sit-down interviews at the coffee or kitchen tables at participants' homes focus on a variety of specific media technologies, attitudes towards these technologies, specific everyday life strategies for interacting with these technologies, and general strategies of acquiring new knowledge on how to use ICTs across the life course.[1] The indoor walking interviews at the homes of the participants are conducted after the life-graph discussions and semi-structured sit-down interviews. Under the lead of the interviewee, interviewer and interviewee tour the interviewee's home, stop at different media devices, and have a casual conversation about them. As I have argued elsewhere [25], the main advantage of including walking interviews in small domestic spaces in the methodology design is that the method counters some of the power imbalances inherent to more traditional interview set-ups, allows for more informal glimpses of everyday life, and explicitly invites media objects into the research process. All of this enables a deeper understanding of the complex entanglements of older adults and ICTs [25].

So far, 10 life-graph discussions, 10 semi-structured sit-down interviews, and 10 walking interviews at the homes of participants have been conducted. In total, more than 24 hours of recordings of conversations have been transcribed, using a semi-detailed transcription scheme. The analysis of the transcriptions was based on the steps Udo Kuckartz suggested within the frameworks of "content-structuring qualitative content analysis" [27]. This form of analysis combines deductive categorization and inductive (open) coding inspired by Grounded Theory [28]. After carefully reviewing the entire interview material, main thematic categories were developed based on the main research question,[2] topics of the questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews, and notes taken during the initial review of the transcripts. The main six categories that were finally developed for the initial deductive analysis were "media biographies" (1), "information and communication technologies/ devices" (2), "user strategies" (3), "attitudes towards ICTs" (4), "intergenerationality" (5), and "identity" (6). Using these six categories, the entire interview material was categorized.

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[1] The questionnaire for the semi-structured sit-down interviews was developed on the basis of a questionnaire developed by Fernández-Ardèvol [26] for a case study on the adoption and use of cell phones by older adults.

[2] "How do Austrian women aged 60–70 years use and ascribe meaning to various ICTs?".

Subsequently, sub-categories for each main category were developed inductively, applying an open coding strategy [28]. The advantage of Kuckartz's approach is that it enables a creative and explorative interaction with the interview material while also ensuring a structured analytical procedure. Using content-structuring qualitative content analysis [27], more than 3,300 text segments could be categorized and coded.

In terms of a theoretical lens guiding the analysis, "anocriticism,"[3] [29] an interpretational approach developed by Roberta Maierhofer [29–32], was important for the review of the interview material. Anocriticism encourages the analysis of continuities *and* changes within an individuals' life course, as well as thinking of intersectional interrelations between age and gender. Much like in a feminist approach, anocriticism calls for a "search for a specific female culture of ageing" [31, p. 156], as well as for a distinction between chronological and cultural age [30, p. 129]. This interpretational lens was important for the present analysis, since it enabled a foregrounding of individual experiences in the context of ICT engagement, as well as adding the generational aspects to the context of the research [6]. However, anocriticism does not only help to emphasize individual *variations* in biographies that influence today's use of ICTs. Perhaps even more importantly, adopting an anocritical perspective enables the reader (in this case the reader of interview transcripts) to become a "resisting reader," as Maierhofer [31, p. 157] has argued building on Judith Fetterley's work. Resisting readers forgo traditional interpretations and investigate how a text challenges common understandings [31, p. 157]. In the context of analyzing older women's experiences and interactions with ICTs, this means to forgo mainstream interpretations of age as homogenous [5, p. 1] or generally related to missing technical competencies [33], and instead focus on the "subject of women growing old" [32, p. 334] and how these subjects actively and creatively use information and communication technologies (and talk about them) to negotiate their identities as human beings within time and society.

3   Results

By looking for *dominant images of self*, *common contexts* in which the use of ICTs was reflected on, and *points of resistance and explicit negotiation of identities* in the interview transcripts, three major thematic frameworks of participants' narrations of ICT experiences could be identified: "collective identities within time" (1), "social identities in the family context" (2), and "resisting identities" (3). In this context, identity is to be understood as referring to both a "thematization of self" [34, p. 151], and a *narration* or *construction* of self [34, pp. 151–152]. Within the frameworks of this study, identity thus comprises structural elements on the macro level, such as "generation location" [21] or gender as well as elements of meso and micro levels such as identities in a specific family setting or very personal life context.

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[3] For a definition and etymology of anocriticism see, for example, source 29.

3.1 Collective Identities Within Time

The first thematic framework which proves to be important for participants' narrations of their ICT engagement comprises notions of *collectively shared identities with regards to experiences of time*. All interviewees expressed a sense of "temporal location in the historical process" [20, p. 139], as Alwin succinctly puts it. As stated elsewhere [6], this sense of cohort identity was often expressed by interviewees sharing childhood memories of "generation-specific" media experiences, such as having to be silent when parents listened to the radio or watching television as a group, in a family context. In addition, as the current analysis revealed, the experience of having had "little media" around when one was young was mentioned by multiple interviewees. Interviewee 3 (I 3), a 60-year old former secretary and homemaker living in a suburb of the Styrian capital Graz, stated that when she was young her family only had "[a] radio. That was it. There was nothing else."[4] But it was not only in terms of material realities that interviewees expressed an awareness of being historically located. Statements also reflected notions of generation in a Mannheimian sense, as "similarly 'stratified' consciousness" [21, p. 297] or "Zeitgeist" [20, p. 138]. As already illustrated in the discussion of previous intermediary results [6], multiple participants also expressed a feeling of generational belonging with regard to using media moderately and refusing to be part of a "throw-away-society" (I 3).

While notions of a cohort or generational identity with regard to media use were already prominent in previous analyses, more *dynamic* experiences of living within time only became apparent in the current analysis. Most interviewees believed that "the young" have media experiences different to their own. Interviewee 4, a woman from a small village in her mid-sixties, who used to work as an accounting clerk, thinks that "the young are just able to handle [media] differently." Interviewee 6, a woman in her early sixties who had migrated from Britain to Austria in her earlier years and used to work as a social worker before retirement, shares this perspective: "I think you [interviewer in her early 30s], you are of the Internet generation, you grew up with it. It is part of your life, it is just there, you can't imagine to be without it. We didn't. […] [T]he majority of young people knows stuff and if they know stuff or they don't know it, they know where to look for it. And if you are constantly part of that change – renew, renew – you are not having to make such big leaps, whereas [for] somebody of my age probably buying a tablet the first time is a big thing!" Also, interviewee 10, a woman in her early sixties living in a small village and who used to work as a bank clerk, shares this impression. Talking about how she does not like to look things up on the Internet to find out how to operate ICTs, she states: "It is somehow an effort […]. I think our generation did not grow with it [new ICTs], but rather entered [the situation] at some point. And, well, for me this close connection did not develop […]." Similar observations of notions of "being different from the young" were also reported in other studies, such as Crow and Sawchuk's investigation of mobile phone use among Canadian seniors [15, p. 501], Rebecca Hill, Paul Beynon-Davies, and Michael D. Williams'

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[4] The majority of interviews was conducted in German. Only interview number 6 was conducted in English. Thus, with the exceptions of quotes from the transcript of interview number 6, all quotes from transcripts are translations from German to English by the author.

exploration of older people's Internet engagement [35, p. 257], Tiina Suopajärvi's findings [36, pp. 117–119] or Buse's study on embodiment and ICT use in later life [10].

In the current study, a lot of references to the smartphone were made in terms of an embodied age identity, for example by elaborating on how swiping as a movement has to be learned when purchasing a cell phone. Such findings are notable because they point to dynamic aspects of aging experiences, to experiences of time passing and things changing. They point to experiences of change of older ICT users and also to negotiations of age and cultural images associated with it. Negotiations of age particularly surfaced with regard to the questions of when one stops 'growing with' technologies and of when one is 'young' or 'old' with regard to media [37, pp. 6–8]. Although participants repeatedly stated that their media experiences and engagements are different from those of 'the young,' multiple participants also portrayed themselves as different from 'the old.' For example, talking about cell phones, interviewee 4 stated: "And the age-appropriate cell phone, I find that very good for the old folks. I say, well, I don't need it yet, but I have a sister who already is an old lady and she has such an age-appropriate phone and she can handle that quite well […]." Also interviewee 8, a woman in her early sixties who still works as a farmer in the Styrian countryside, negotiated her own aging identity noting that she would not like to take a traditional beginner's class for computer use "because if there are just seniors [in the class], then it probably won't be effective." Older adults, particularly older women, are often framed as the "Other" in terms of cultural narratives, as age critic Margaret Cruikhank [38, p. 5], among others, has noted. Also, participants of this study used this broader cultural reference point talking about their media experiences. These cultural images are negotiated in the interviews. Interviewee 6, for example, noted that she would not like to have a phone specifically designed for seniors: "I don't, in design, want to be different to everybody else. I am not gonna advertise 'Look, I need this big thing.'" Thus, interviewee 6 refused to be labeled as "different" from "everybody else" (the young) and indicated that she does not want to be seen with a device which is culturally coded as 'old.' As Suopajärvi [36, p. 117] notes, senior users engage in "boundary-making" between themselves and "old age." However, these boundaries are being negotiated ambivalently by emphasizing differences to "the young," but also to "the old" in terms of engagement with ICTs.

3.2   Social Identities in the Family Context

As the analysis of the interview material has shown, by far the most important reference point for participants to talk about their ICT experiences were social contexts, particularly family settings. After finishing the analysis, references to one's identity as a "socially-embedded" person (e.g. a mother, grandmother, member of a community or special interest group) in the context of ICT use amounted to more than 400 codings. Other possible reference points for the narration of ICT experiences, such as entertainment, were only rarely mentioned. This finding is supported by results of other studies on older adults' ICT use, such as Sawchuk and Crow's study on older Canadians' interactions with cell phones [15, p. 497]. Particularly often, interviewees talked about their own children and grandchildren when discussing their media experiences. Thus, regarding different frames for narrations of ICT experiences, participants' identity in terms of "kinship position" [20, p. 135] was key. Interviewee 2, a sixty-nine-year old woman from the suburbs of Graz who has been a

homemaker and also used to work as a secretary in commerce and the social sector, referred to herself as a "cybermom" talking about her media use in comparison to her daughter and how she has always enjoyed shooting home videos with a super 8 early on.

In this context, it is important to note that participants' references to generation in terms of a specific phase within the life course were highly gendered. Interviewees frequently talked about their ICT experiences in the context of care work and household chores. Particularly often, they talked about their ICT use in the context of taking care of their grown-up children and grandchildren. For example, being asked where she uses her cell phone, interviewee 9, a sixty-two year old woman living in Graz who still works part-time as an accountant at an NGO, stated that "[…] the cell phone is like an umbilical cord. Without the cell phone I have to say, that might sound strange, but then [without the cell phone] I feel [that] something is missing. Then I am not connected with the world. You see, it is even in the bedroom. At night, I put it on silent mode but I am always afraid [that] the two sons […], if they call and I am not available. I always have to be available for them." Many other participants talked about their ICT experiences in connection to performing care work as grandmothers. For example, interviewee 7, a woman in her early sixties living in the countryside, who used to run a grocery store together with her husband and continues to work part-time at a supermarket, stated with regard to gaining knowledge about new ICTs: "[…] I have always wanted to participate [in a computer class] at some point […] but I never managed time-wise with the kids [referring to grandchildren] because at the beginning I had to watch [my grandson] and there was always something, so […] I never managed time-wise." Also many other interviewees referred to their role as grandmother when it comes to engaging with ICTs. Interviewee 5, a sixty-two-year old woman from a small city in Upper Styria, who has been a homemaker and carer for most of her life, after having completed a seamstress apprenticeship in her youth, thinks that computers are for people who do not have grandchildren, like one of her friends. Her experience, however, is different: "[I]f there are also grandchildren, there is action and chaos anyways, thus a computer isn't of interest for us or very little because if all three [grandkids] are here during the weekend, there is action, so you are glad when they leave [again] and then I lie down and probably turn on the TV, but the computer, very little." As Ivan and Hebblethwaite [17, p. 12] have highlighted in their work on grandmothers' experiences of social networks, grandparent roles are still heavily gendered. Grandmothers are expected to take care of family bonding and maintain family relationships [17, p. 12]. This also became apparent in many ways in this study. Besides being available for their own kids on the phone and watching grandchildren, participants also shared other ways of performing their roles as family carers during the interviews. Interviewee 4, for example, reported that she keeps a kind of 'family log-book.' Because she has a big family and wants to remember details about each member, she started noting down facts about relatives in a word document: "[…] sounds weird, but […] we have a big family and at some point I have noted down everybody with their siblings and their kids and there I note down certain things […] because you cannot remember all of this […]. [If] we did not get there [to her relatives' place] for a long time, I take a look [at the file], what was his name, what was the kid's name, how old is the kid, that helps a lot and prevents embarrassments." In addition to caring for relations with close and extended family, participants also repeatedly talked about their media experiences in relation to their identities as homemakers. As Buse [14, p. 1159] has found, gender roles are important in the

context of negotiating boundaries of work, leisure, and retirement. Interviewee 8, for example, talking about her daily routines, stated that she combines household work and media engagement: "I have been cooking and it is a bad habit, but the TV is on, I actually never look at it […] or during ironing, I watch something […]. [I]t is a […] habit, a bad one, to have the TV on while cooking. […] I never used to turn the TV on while doing work [referring to household chores], except for ironing, I have always done that." Interviewee 8 perceives all the tasks she performs at home as "work," thus it is important to not only investigate older women's engagement with ICT in terms of leisure, but also with regard to their frequent and intense roles as "family manger[s]," as interviewee 2 referred to herself.

Another important aspect regarding participants' framings of their stories on their ICT use was intergenerational support with technologies, which already emerged as an important category early on in the study [6, 25], and has also been identified in other studies [39]. Also in this study, the most prominent strategy among interviewees to gain new knowledge about ICT use or acquisition of new devices was to ask their children (and the children's partners) for advice. Examples from the transcript are numerous in this context. Talking about using new ICTs, interviewee 7, for example, stated that her son's help was essential for her initial use of the computer: "[W]ithout […] my older son being there and arranging everything, we would have probably not managed […]. He helped us a lot then and actually from this point on I was also more interested [in computers] und then I took a computer class." As also noted by Fausto Colombo and Simone Carlo [40, p. 168], everyday family interactions are key when regarding the adoption of new ICTs and general approaches to using media. However, findings of the present study show that intergenerational support can be mutual between family members with different "kinship position" [20, p. 135]. While many participants supported their grown-up children in terms of care work for them and their children, they received support with ICTs. Older women use their experiences with ICTs to express images of gender roles and age, as Meika Loe [41] has argued. As the analysis has shown, also in the Austrian context, older women specifically use their experiences with ICTs to negotiate their gendered identities, such as the grandmother role.

3.3   Resisting Identities

Investigating generational perspectives – in terms of cohorts, Mannheimian generations, or positions in a family – helps to identify important aspects of older women's ICT engagement, such as intergenerational support. However, solely focusing on strongly collectively influenced identities regarding older women's ICT experiences, such as the grandmother role, can prevent us from seeing individuals in the context of their *unique* life narratives [42, p. 407]. Thus, examining "resisting identities" with regard to older women's ICT use is equally important. As Ivan and Hebblethwaite [17, p. 21] have argued, older adults' ICT choices need to be understood in the context of agency. As the interviews have shown, older women use – and sometimes also *do not* use – information and communication technologies to express their very individual identities, independent of references to generational experiences or family commitments. Examples from the interview material are numerous. Interviewee 1, a woman aged sixty-six, coming from the Styrian capital, who used to work part-time as a secretary in the public sector, besides being a homemaker, uses her stereo, cassette player, and record player to express her identity as chorister and music lover. For

interviewee 4, new ICTs are a means of supporting environmental causes such as biodiversity, and thus strengthening her identity as an environmentalist. Interviewee 5, who generally identified herself as a non-user of new ICTs, only reads text messages to facilitate her work as a volunteer with an aid organization. And interviewee 10 interprets ICTs as a means supporting her training as a mystic and healer. In this context, approaches originally developed in the field of literary studies, such as Maierhofer's "anocriticism" approach [29–32], can enrich the analysis of empirical text material, such as interview transcripts, and help diversify the images of older ICT users. As Maierhofer [30, p. 141] has argued, interpreters of texts need to acknowledge the importance of self-definition of old "protagonists." In addition, the inclusion of the method of "walking interviews in small domestic spaces" into the design of empirical studies is promising with regard to the discovery of multiplicities of meaning and personal relevance related to older people's ICT engagement [25].

In the case of this study, besides identifying individual identities relevant to ICT engagement, such as being a musician or an esoteric, an analysis informed by anocriticism also allowed for the discovery of a strong sense of self-determination in many interviews. Most prominently, this sense of self-determination surfaced in the case of interviewee 5, who very consciously decided not to engage with technologies such as the Internet, and actively resists the general public discourse of the Internet as indispensable for life in the 21st century: "Well, and some do say, 'Don't you miss it [the Internet]? Or what?' I don't miss it because I don't know it, [and I] don't need it." Instead of using the Internet, she likes to walk her dog or walk down to the river, which seems more important to her: "I get more out of this." Also, with regard to concrete interactions with ICTs, a sense of self-determination was expressed by multiple interviewees. Particularly prominent was the notion of "being in charge" because one is able to simple turn off media devices by pushing the power button or deciding not to turn them on in the first place. As interviewee 2 said with regard to bad TV programs: "[O]ne must not complain all the time. I don't have to watch." For others, such as interviewee 6, self-determination also plays a role in the adoption of new technologies. Elaborating on her use of radio, interviewee 6 states: "[…] I hate listening to half a program on the radio and having to stand there till it's finished, so I tend to podcast in recent years and then I just take it around with my iPod and listen to it when I want." Thus, notions of self-determination are expressed in many different forms in the interview material.

4   Conclusion

What have I discovered and learned analyzing the interview material collected? When and how do communication and information technologies matter to women 60+? On the one hand, the analysis of the life-graph discussions, semi-structured sit-down interviews, and walking interviews at home confirmed previous findings obtained in the course of this multi-year study, namely the importance of intergenerational relationships and also the influence of generational factors on engagement with ICTs, as argued previously in the context of methodological reflections [25, p. 52] and presentation of interim results [6, pp. 61–64]. On the other hand, the current analysis suggests that the notion of "generation" is much more complex in the perspective of study participants than anticipated at first thought. While previous interim results of the study [6, pp. 61–62] suggested a relatively

strong importance of childhood experiences for participants' current interactions with ICTs, present results show that notions of generation in the sense of "kinship positions" [20, p. 135] or "a period in the life course" [5, p. 2] are much more crucial for older women's narrations of ICT experiences. Besides cohort and generational notions, more dynamic experiences of living within time became apparent in the analysis as well. Talking about media experiences, many of the participants dismissed a binary notion of young and old by refusing to belong to "the old" (media users) and simultaneously distancing themselves from the radically different media experiences of "the young." Instead, interviewees put forward the idea of age as a relational category and portrayed themselves as being "old" and "young" at the same time. For participants, talking about ICTs thus is "doing age" [43, p. 89, for example].

Although identity references related to the macro level of society played an important role in the interviews, notions of generational identity in terms of family lineage prove to be even more important for the narrative framing of older women's experiences with ICTs. For participants of the study, talking about experiences with information and communication technologies also meant talking about caring for their grown-up children and grandchildren. In this context, gendered age identities were very prominent. Besides caring for their own kids and watching grandchildren, interviewees also fostered family relations in creative ways, for example by starting a 'family log-book' on the computer to keep track of extensive family networks (interviewee 4). In many ways, women participating in the study lived up to the role of a "grandmother" who is culturally expected to maintain family relationships [17, p. 12].

However, women also used other, more individual notions of self to frame their stories on ICT usage. These included, among others, identities connected to music, political orientations, volunteer work, and spiritual beliefs. Many women interviewed also voiced a sense of agency and of "being in charge" with regard to ICTs, for example in being able to just turn off a device. As this study has shown, theoretical tools such as "anocriticism" [29–32], as well as inclusive research methods, such as walking interviews at older peoples' homes, can help highlight more individual aspects of engagement with ICTs and "complicate" the image of older ICT users. This is crucial since older women's experiences with ICTs are multi-layered. They include multiple temporal perspectives, implicit and explicit references to larger cultural narratives on age and gender, as well as varying personal points of reference. Loe [41, p. 321] has argued that older women use technology for the "expression of womanhood, even in old age." Reviewing the interview material of the present study, I would like to take Loe's point even further by stating that older women do not only "express" their identities engaging with information and communication technologies, but *actively create*, *critically negotiate, and resist* their multiple identities as human beings within time.

5   Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This paper has discussed how Austrian women aged 60–70 years narrate their everyday life experiences with ICTs and identified central thematic frames of the stories they shared on their engagement with these technologies. In total, three dominant frames of narration could

be identified analyzing the interview material collected: references to collective identities within time, references to social identities in the family context, and references to "resisting" identities pointing to unique personal life experiences. Although this study aims at contributing to the growing body of scholarly literature highlighting *agency* of older adults in their ICT engagement, it also acknowledges the importance social *structures* with regard to older adults' experiences with ICTs such as, for example, differences in socio-economic status. While interviewees of different social and economic backgrounds have been included in the sample, most interviewees belonged to the Austrian middle class. In addition to the focus on only one age-group (60–70 years) for reasons of comparability and feasibility, the relative homogeneity of the sample in terms of class and ethnicity represents another limitation of the study. Also the relatively small sample size due the exploratory design of the study is a limitation of this investigation. Recommendations for future studies are thus twofold. For future empirical studies the use of a larger sample – for example also in the context of a quantitative research design – is recommended in order to investigate frequency and distribution of different thematic framings of ICT experiences of older women in society as a whole. Yet, it is also important to reflect on the inclusivity or exclusivity of certain research methodologies. Thus, another recommendation for future studies on older women's ICT experiences is to include inclusive research methods such as "walking interviews in small domestic spaces" [25] in the design to ensure diversity in representation.

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