

# **Social Ties as Key to Contributions and Loyalty of Social Software Users**

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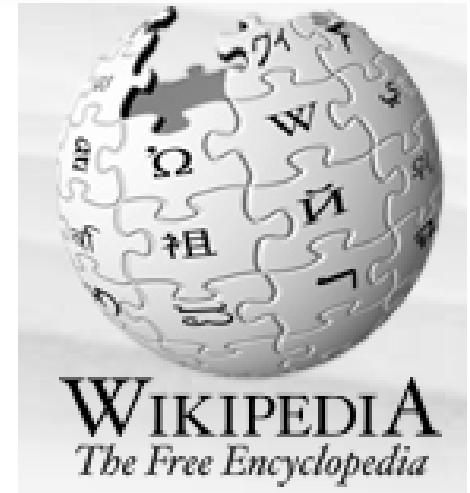


# Social Ties and Social Software

- Social software and Web 2.0 applications rely on users' contributions.  
⇒ The *continuity* of users' contributions is essential.

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BETA



# Social Ties and Social Software

- The *primary benefits* of social software are less motivating for users' contribution to a specific community than the *social relevance* of the contribution. (Liang et al., 2005)
  - Other users' responses to a contribution are motivating for further contributions. (Joyce & Kraut, 2006)
- ⇒ Understanding social ties in the context of social software can be a key to success.



# What do we know about social ties?

## A social psychological perspective

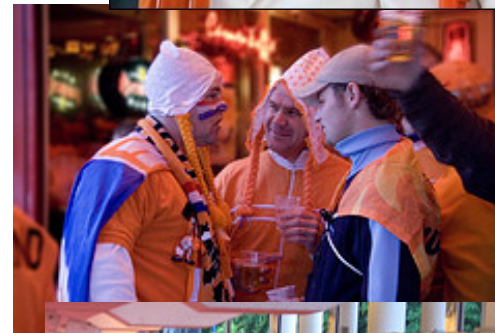


# Types of Social Ties and Types of Groups

- Social ties can be based on:
  - personal attraction
  - social identification
- Based on this distinction two types of groups can be distinguished:
  - *Common bond groups* are based on personal attraction (e.g. a group of friends)
  - *Common identity groups* are based on group attraction (e.g. a sports team)

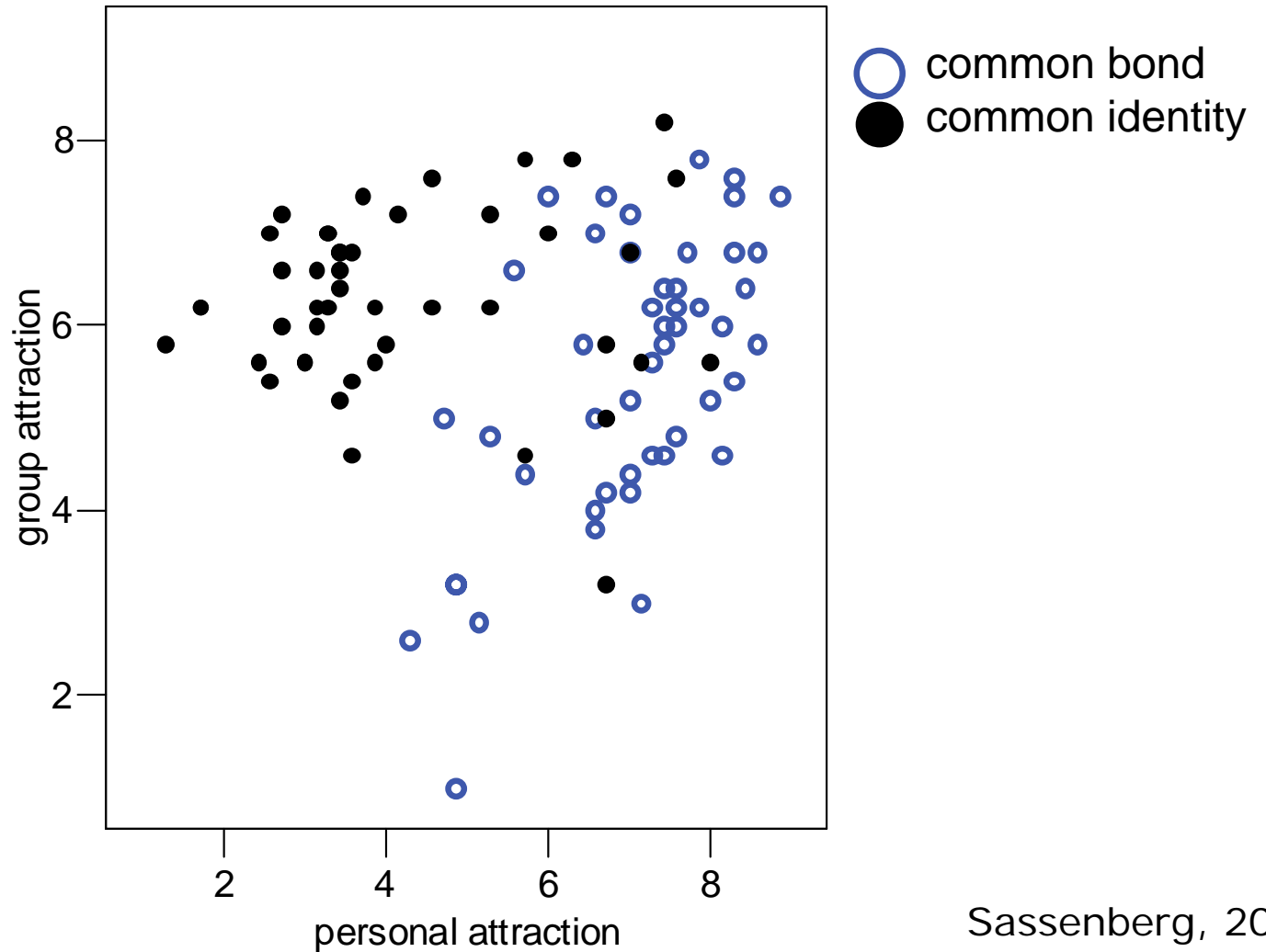
(Prentice, Miller, & Lightdale, 1994)

# Common Bond vs. Common Identity Group





# Types of Groups or Types of Ties?



Sassenberg, 2002



# Personal Attraction

## *Determinants*

- similarity
- proximity
- (appropriate) self-disclosure
- perceived fairness in exchange

⇒ Personal attraction is a product of a slow time consuming process.

## *Consequences*

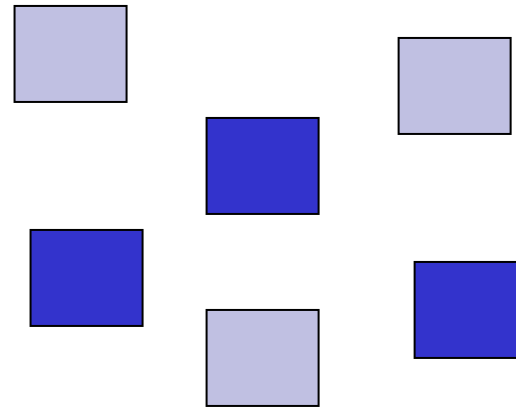
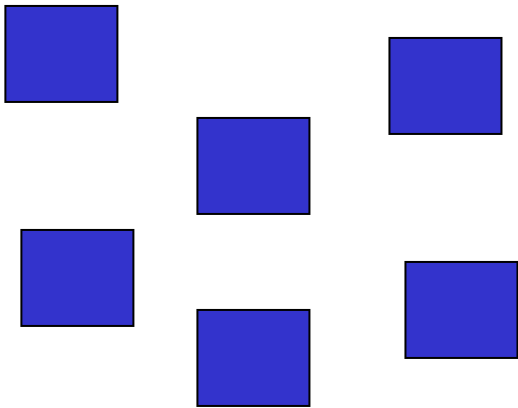
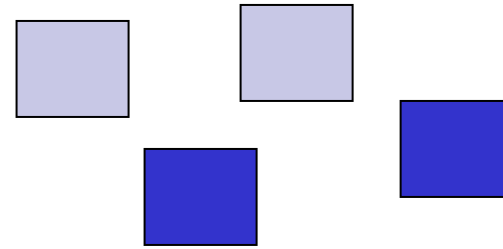
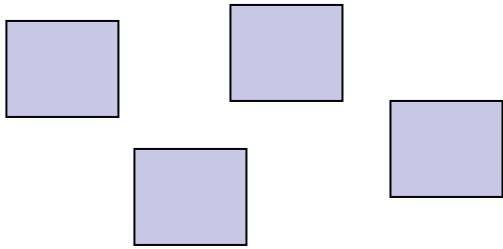
- equity rather than equality rule is applied
  - individuals rather than groups stick together
- ⇒ Groups formed based on personal attraction can fall apart.



# Social Identification

## *Determinants*

- perceived fit of a social categorization in a context



## *Determinants*

- perceived fit of a social categorization in a context
- self-chosen social categories lead to stronger identification than super-imposed ones
- group function for the individual (e.g. exercising, transcendence)
- fulfillment of needs (e.g. reduction of uncertainty, increased self-esteem)

k2

⇒ Fast and frugal process

k2

Erster Punkt doppelt im Vergleich zu Folie 10. Im Aufbau so gewollt?

kkaldewey; 18.06.2008

## *Consequences*

- adherence to group norms
  - effort in favor of the group
  - equality rule is applied within the group
  - perceived group homogeneity
- ⇒ Groups which individuals identify with have a strong impact on them.



# Evidence from Online Research



# Personal Attraction – Online I

- Research on social relationships online for a long time focused on this type of relationships ...  
... and found that they are even harder to be formed online.  
(Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984; Walther, 1992)
  - Later it was discovered that the available cues about persons that are relevant to the collaboration have a particularly strong impact. (Walther, 1996; Sassenberg et al., 2001)
- ⇒ Everything but optimal for social software





## Personal Attraction – Online II

- But why do so many successful communities ostensibly rely on interpersonal ties?
  - They make use of real world interpersonal relations.
  - They rely on social categories.



# Social Identification – Online

- Social identification has proven ...
    - ... to increase the effort in favor of online communities.  
(Dholakia et al., 2004; Wodzicki et al., in prep.)
    - ... to decrease the likelihood that members leave a group.  
(Utz & Sassenberg, 2001)
    - ... to increase the adherence to group norms. (Sassenberg, 2002)
  - Online groups ...
    - ... become part of members' self-concept. (Utz, 2003)
    - ... have an impact on members' identity beyond virtual reality.  
(McKenna & Bargh, 1998)
- ⇒ The perfect preconditions for social software




# Implications for Social Software

# Social Software Relying on *Existing Groups*

- Anonymity helps to increase participants' readiness to contribute.
  - less social anxiety
  - newcomers get involved more easily
  - stigmata are less relevant
- Place independence can help to find a critical mass.
- ...



# Social Software Relying on *New Groups*

- Fit by social customizing
  - Functions requiring a group:
    - communication
    - social interaction
    - social exchange
  - Needs that can easily be satisfied online:
    - self-presentation
    - self-esteem: visible credits
-  room for interpersonal ties



**Thank you very much  
for your attention!**