

KAIRI TALVES

The dynamics of gender representations  
in the context of Estonian social  
transformations





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## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

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## AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

As the author of the dissertation, I have contributed to these publications as follows:

- I:** This study is an object of sole authorship. I was solely responsible for defining the research problem, conducting analysis, interpreting the results and drawing conclusions.
- II:** This study was written in partnership with three authors. I had the leading role in developing the theoretical framework for the study and participated in the initiation of the conceptual framework and research design of the study.
- III:** This study was written in partnership with three authors. I was responsible for one part of the theoretical framework and for adapting the theoretical considerations into conclusions.
- IV:** I was a major contributor to all phases of this study: the formulation of research questions, research design, qualitative data analysis and drawing conclusions.

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## INTRODUCTION

Estonia is a country that has faced numerous changes in the economic, political and social sphere in recent decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union opened the way to social and cultural changes with several parallel ‘transformations’ in society in regard to the welfare system, cultural values, technological change etc. (Lauristin 2003, Trumm 2011, Paškov 2011, Lauristin et al 2018). The change in the value system, especially on the materialism-post-materialism scale in the sense of turning from materialist, survival values to self-expression values (Inglehart and Welzel 2005), has not been a linear process. Instead, it has been a mixture of the asymmetrical development of different values and unbalanced shifts for different social groups, offering new life opportunities for some and loss and impoverishment for others (Raudsepp, Tart and Heinla 2013). The struggle between different value orientations is also visible in the gender system, involving complex and multifaceted inequalities between men and women. For example, although Estonian women on average have a higher education level than men and participate equally in the labour force, high gender segregation, the pay gap in the labour market (Eurostat 2014) and unbalanced gender roles in the domestic sphere (Hansson & Ugaste 2012) still indicate the existence of traditional patriarchal structures in society. Such contradictions pose a broader question about changes in society. My thesis aims to explore and contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of gender representations in the context of multiple and often paradoxical social transformations.

Traditionally, sex and gender are viewed as interchangeable terms, and the gender binary is often viewed as having two distinct and fixed categories: men/male and women/female. The internal stability of these terms seems to reflect the inherent condition of gender, meaning a non-changeable and non-revisable reality. However, when we divide people into binary domains based on gender, we create essential categories which consider males and females as separate entities, with ‘gender’ as the great divider. Such polarisation creates an artificial gap between women and men, and reinforces gender roles based on the internalised belief that men and women are essentially different. And this involves far more than just the division of social categories. Such separation makes men and women behave in ways that appear essentially different, according to socially accepted gender stereotypes, which create certain gender norms and practices connected with these norms. In order to confront the static, binary categorisation of gender, the new paradigm in the sociology of gender started to stress that gender is a fluid category (i.e. Butler 2007 [1990], West and Zimmermann 1987). Gender is understood as a process, a *doing* rather than a *being*. This means that gender is not an essential category: by ‘doing’ gender we create gendered identities, which are constituted through social interactions (West and Zimmermann 1987).

Referring to the conflict, or the paradigmatic differences, in the epistemology of gender described above, we see that confusion in understanding gender

is still present. It is demonstrated in empirical facts dealing with the persistence of rigid gender stereotypes and binary gender roles, which tend to produce and reproduce gender inequalities in societies. At the same time, we have evidence that changing intergenerational relationships within families, social, legal and technological changes, and changes in other domains, have transformed the social values of gender. Therefore, a deeper understanding of gender representations and their dynamics in society is still necessary.

In my thesis, I use the concept of representations as an ‘umbrella term’ to explain the interconnections between the knowledge and communication of gender as a basis for gendered meanings and positions that are available for people to make sense of and ‘locate’ themselves in the context of discursive and communicative practices. This framework, which evolved from the social representation theory (e.g. Bauer and Gaskell 2008, Duveen 2007, Marková 2012, Moscovici 2008 [1976], Wagner and Hayes 2005), helps to contextualise the formation of individual knowledge and position within the common principles shared by people in a society. It also allows us to evaluate social change by projecting the process of elaborating ‘novelty’ (Wagner 1998) in gender representations and placing them in the context of transformations in society.

The thesis is based on four original studies that form a set of case studies on gender representations in the context of transformations and dynamics in Estonian society. Rapid and complex changes in society provide an opportunity and an obligation to study the same phenomenon from different angles. In my thesis, I link individual agency and positioning with the objectification of gender representations in Estonia. Therefore, the studies of the thesis employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine information on patterns of gender representation in society and the micro processes of knowledge construction and positioning in the context of gender. The empirical data used in the thesis concentrate on different aspects of transformations, providing information on cultural and ideological changes, as well as changes in socialisation patterns and intergenerational relationships.

The specific objectives and respective research questions of the thesis are:

I Gender representations from the perspective of female professionals. The aim is to analyse gender representations in Estonia through the process of discursive self-positioning (**Study I**)

What kind of positions are created in the context of gender representations and do these positions support or challenge the dominant representations of gender? What role does gender play in the statuses and identities of people in society? What kind of inequalities are produced through the reproduction of gender representations?

II Gender representations from the perspective of social status and stratification. The aim is to explore the paradoxes of gender representations in the context of social transformations (**Study II and Study III**)

How do transformations in society shape the representations of gender? What challenges and paradoxes are created for gender representations by the emerging information society? How do intersections between gender and other factors influence the gender system?

III Gender representations from the perspective of children's internet use, parenting practices and socialisation patterns. The aim is to explore gender socialisation and the prospects for change in gender representations (**Study III and Study IV**)

How do changing socialisation patterns and children-parent relationships transform gender representations and do these patterns support or hinder change? How do social subjects cope with the unpredictability and uncertainty of transformations?

The introductory article is structured as follows: the first part introduces the theoretical framework of my thesis and links social representation theory and its socio-dynamic paradigm with the concepts of identity, positioning and socialisation as components of gender representations; additionally, it gives an overview of the concept of social transformations and its role in the Estonian context, addressing its main societal developments in recent decades. The second part is dedicated to the methodological approach and it focuses on the combination of methods for studying gender representations and their dynamics in society, as well as giving an overview of the data and specific methods that were used in the original studies. The third chapter introduces the main findings of each study, with a more general discussion based on the analytical questions of the thesis. The introductory article ends with a short chapter on the main conclusions.

# 1. THEORETICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

## 1.1. Social representations theory: functions and implications for gender

### 1.1.1. Social representations theory

Social representations theory has been developed since the 1960s as a useful theoretical and practical multidisciplinary social research tool. The forerunner of social representation theory was Émile Durkheim, with his sociological theory of knowledge. For Durkheim, the basic component of human nature was dualism, the concept that he used to describe the relations between the individual and society. He pointed out that social facts cannot be reduced to psychological facts and the perception of knowledge cannot be based only on individual representations. Individual representations result from the physical and biological nature of the individual and, therefore, are varied and personal. To explain autonomous reality, Durkheim created the concept of ‘collective representations’ (Durkheim 1968 [1898]), which he contrasted with individual representations. Collective representations are images, beliefs, symbols and concepts that arise directly from social structures and form the interface between culture and society. Durkheim believed that collective representations form a social reality which, above all, plays an institutional and coercive role. Society imposes constraints on the individual through norms and sets of standards for goals and actions and, if individuals do not fulfil these standards, society enforces sanctions. With this presupposition of social reality, Durkheim considered collective representations to be external to the individual and he argued that individuals adopt and reproduce them through the process of internalisation (Markovà 2003).

Following Durkheim’s work and taking the first steps towards social representations theory, Serge Moscovici, in his study *La psychoanalyse, son image et son public*, looked at the ways in which diverse social groups build their specific knowledge of the same topic according to their particular context, modes of thought and ideologies (Moscovici 2008 [1976]). For Moscovici, the goal was not to produce a functionalist Durkheimian notion of collective representations. Instead, he sought a theory that accounted both for social structures and for processes whereby social subjects constantly generate, interpret and transform knowledge inter-subjectively. Unlike the Durkheimian conception of social subjects as passive actors who are ‘paralysed’ in the face of social control, Moscovici explored the ways in which social groups are structured and act according to different yet shared social representations, enabling them to perceive, make sense of and transform them, while being active participants in knowledge production and communication (de Rosa 2013).

At this point, I need to define what is meant by ‘social representations’. According to Moscovici, ‘social representations are systems of ideas, values

and practices with a *dual* function: firstly, to establish a framework of order that enables individuals to become familiar with and be part of the social and material world and, secondly, to enable communication between members of community, providing them with a shared social exchange code which names and classifies various aspects of the world' (Moscovici 2008 [1976]). This dual meaning of representation is one of the most important aspects of social representations theory. Hence, it is important to understand that social representations are constructed in culture, they always develop and circulate, and they are transformed in inter-subjective and inter-group processes. It is impossible to find an isolated social representation; it always develops, circulates and is transformed in a social arena. Moscovici also highlighted the term common sense (*sensus communis*), which denotes a symbolic capital in which all knowledge is historically rooted and transformed. It raises the importance of lived experiences in meaning production. According to social representations theory, things are not defined by their physical properties, but by their lived aspects, with their value and action components, the meanings that are given to certain things that have been transformed by contextual and everyday usage (Jodelet 2008). The historical production of knowledge includes two processes, anchoring and objectification, through which the unfamiliar becomes familiar and new concepts and ideas are assimilated to pre-existing knowledge. Anchoring is the integration of new phenomena into existing world-views, so they can be interpreted and compared to the 'already known'. Objectification involves translating abstract meanings into concrete ones, and it takes place symbolically, through metaphors and analogies, or materially, linked to objects and entities. Through these two processes, 'the social representations fulfil their dual role: first, they make *conventional* the objects, people and events we face and second, they are *prescriptive* and ordain our thinking even before we start to think' (Moscovici 2000: 22–23).

### **1.1.2. The socio-dynamic paradigm of social representations theory: links to positioning and identity**

After the initial development of social representations theory, it became an interdisciplinary and multicultural theoretical framework. Different research traditions have emphasised the complementary aspects of social representations. Internal dialogue and a growing number of debates between different schools of social sciences have led to the development of various paradigmatic approaches within social representations theory (Laszlo 1997, de Rosa 2013).

One of the paradigms in the context of social representations theory referring particularly to the organising principles of individual position-taking in social interactions is the socio-dynamic paradigm, which was developed by the Geneva School (Doise 1993, 2002, 2005) and later included the work of Staerkle and Clemence (2004) and Spini (2005). The socio-dynamic paradigm takes the anchoring process as the central point and proposes a theoretical model which

aims to reconcile the structural complexity of social representations and their insertion into plural social and ideological contexts.

According to Doise (2002), representations can only be envisaged in the social dynamic, which through communication places social actors in interactive situations. The social dynamic, when elaborated around important issues, induces specific position taking. Positions expressed in interaction depend fundamentally on people's social membership, which refers back to the anchoring process elaborated by Moscovici. Doise adds that positions also depend on the situation within which they are produced and are always set up discursively in the course of communication. The relationship among self, other and object/representation forms the basis for positioning and identity. According to positioning theory (Davies & Harré 1990, Harré & Van Langenhove 1999, Harré & Moghaddam 2003), societal discourses make available a range of positions, i.e. a set of categories and their meanings that people identify with. Positions not only 'locate' people within social relations and discursive 'storylines', but also provide people with ways of making sense of the world. Positioning is always relational, meaning that the adoption of a position always assumes a position for the other as well and includes the power dynamics that shape interactions and the positioning process through the concept of moral orders. Every position has a moral quality in the sense that it is associated with a set of rights and duties which delimit what can be said or done from a certain position, in a particular context and to a particular 'other' (Davies & Harré 1990).

The concept of positioning helps to clarify the double role of representations: they are defined first as principles that generate position taking and they are also principles of organising individual differences. In other words, they supply individuals with common reference points, but these reference points can also be issues that individual differences revolve around (Doise 2002). This means that social dynamics is integrated into the process of the formation of representation, which always includes both consensus and conflict (Moscovici 1998). Consensus gives social agents a common code to discuss and thus constitute social realities, while conflict gives them something to debate, as different interests and relations of power are opposed. In the context of social representations, this also means socio-psychological processes are involved in the acceptance of and resistance to change. Change cannot take place without the presence of something new and different, something that unsettles the stability and taken-for-grantedness of well-established world-views and ways of living (Marková 2003).

Contestation for change involves challenging contemporary societies, where different sciences, religions and knowledge systems compete for followers globally. As a result, there are more critiques and debates and less stability in knowledge systems. The creation of representations fragments under these pressures, giving birth to more dynamic and fluid representational fields (Wagner and Hayes 2005, Giddens 1991). This raises the issue of hegemony versus inner diversity of representations and of who, how and in which contexts it is possible to provide (new) meanings, as well as contest and re-present the

representational system. Moscovici (1994) makes reference to a process where representations may seem unnoticed until some kind of *rupture* takes place in the form of a violation of customs and habitual ways of 'what has to be'. Ruptures are therefore opportunities to open up the topic for discussion and create a new source of identification in terms of certain representational objects.

### 1.1.3. Gender in the context of social representations theory

Gender is one of the first forms of social identity that children acquire and legitimise throughout their lives. Through social representations of gender, social subjects establish a framework in which to position themselves and live within a signified social world. In so far as the objectification of social representations constitutes 'realities', these are the realities of the human world into which the child is born. As Duveen and Lloyd (1990) state, this is imperative: 'we must all develop gender identities as we grow up and are to become competent social actors, this does not mean that we all need to construct the same identities, only that there is an obligation to construct *an* identity, in this, gender is distinct from other social representations, where the identity structure is not imperative, but contractual. For example, it is not an imperative obligation for us to acquire certain professions, but if we wish to do so, we must contract into a particular representational field' (Duveen and Lloyd 1990: 1).

Developing gender identities means stepping into a specific representational system. This includes the historical, ideological and cultural mapping of gendered structures and hierarchies. The representational system of gender needs to be seen from two perspectives. The first one requires turning to the Durkheimian notion of 'collective representations', which has the force of a 'social fact' that resists any argumentation and contestation, and fulfils the functions of social integration and reproduction (Jovchelovitch 2001). Individuals can make no contribution to their formation but can only internalise and perpetuate them in social forms of thinking, feeling and acting (Marková 2003). Moscovici has argued that these collective representations, which he calls 'hegemonic representations' are more common in traditional societies, where there is comparative uniformity in belief and knowledge, which shapes the representational system in line with systems of power (Moscovici 1988). The idea of hegemonic gender representations is strongly supported by the binary construction of gender. The sex of the newborn is among the first things adults are aware of and, starting from there, they think of and treat the child as either a 'boy' or a 'girl'. Socially constructed representations of gender tell adults all they need to know about how a child *should be and why* (Breakwell 1990), and the hegemonic binary sex model positions every individual from birth as male or female, leaving no other choice (Duveen and Lloyd, 1993). Wagner et al (2009) claim that gender is considered an essential category. *Essentialising* in social representations theory means that some categories represent a deeper and unchangeable level of reality than our everyday perception of the world's changing nature. In other

words, some representational objects seem to be unchangeable and eternal. As gender is a social category that is described on a 'natural basis' or as 'real' due to biological attribution of it, it is treated as an unchangeable essence, assigning more stable and homogeneous characteristics to gender representations. This kind of categorisation of gender means that the availability of possible variants constructing different gender identities is limited by 'cultural control' (Connell 2005) and social norms and prescriptions for behaviour are set by strict social constraints.

The second perspective of the gendered representational system claims that the construction of gender identities does not mean that social identities as structures are all similar between groupings of individuals, meaning that not all men have adopted the same masculine and not all women the same feminine identity. On the contrary, social representations of gender identities enable individuals to *position* themselves in a number of different ways. Each type of social gender identity provides a certain version of femininity or masculinity and for children it offers both a means for orienting themselves in the social world and a pathway towards the development of their gender identity in later years (Duveen 1993). Duveen also raises the question of how individuals come to position themselves in different ways, and proposes that this follows the pattern that is established in the multiplicity of representational fields of gender. Social representations of gender mark out positions that offer viable gender identities. Viability refers to the extent to which positions within the gender system are consistent with the norms and values of the system. Through processes of socialisation, each social actor adopts a position marked by different levels of conformity within the available continuum of representations of gender.

Hence, it should be stressed that availability, or more precisely the range of different positions, depends on cultural background and the broader communication system, including social institutions, cultural arrangements, the media, social and political discourses and so forth: this is where the representations appear most prevalent, introducing their sociogenesis into social practices. This also means there are numerous ways in which society transmits values, ideas and practices related to gender and reveals the production of gender and the 'doing' of both culture and identity. The acquisition and construction of gender identity mostly involves the process of socialisation, which starts even before the child is born. He/she is the object of gender representations through the expectations, beliefs and images his/her parents have. Later on, the child is named and categorised into 'familiar' networks, which obviously include gender. Thus, the child's world is structured in terms of gender very early on. Through socialisation, identity is both a process of self-knowledge construction and a process of self-positioning. Thus, the particular configuration of different identity elements constituting the self is also the product of processes similar to those of social representations. As with the inclusion of new elements in a social representation via the anchoring process, positioning is an active process and, as such, allows for variability and individual agency (Duveen 2001). Still, during

socialisation, the social environment has the power to propose/impose self-categorisation, to give meaning to and to shape opportunities, especially in times of rapid changes in society.

Another crucial question concerning social representations theory is what social representations actually do. In order to expose how they are useful and complete research tools with regards to gender constructions in a given society, it is necessary to consider the functions of social representations that are particularly relevant for gender research. Looking at reality from the perspective of functions of social representations in the context of gendered meanings, it is important to become aware of the process of knowledge construction, where the dual tension of knowledge as ‘pre-established’ and knowledge ‘in the making’ can be seen. This enables us to consider the processes through which social reality and meanings are constructed, re-constructed and possibly de-constructed (Flores 2009). To conceptualise and design my study, I have adopted the idea of four basic functions (following Jodelet 2008) of social representations and placed them into the framework of the socio-dynamic paradigm (de Rosa 2013) to show how gender representations at different levels determine individuals’ physical and social environment and influence their behaviour and practices (see Figure 1).

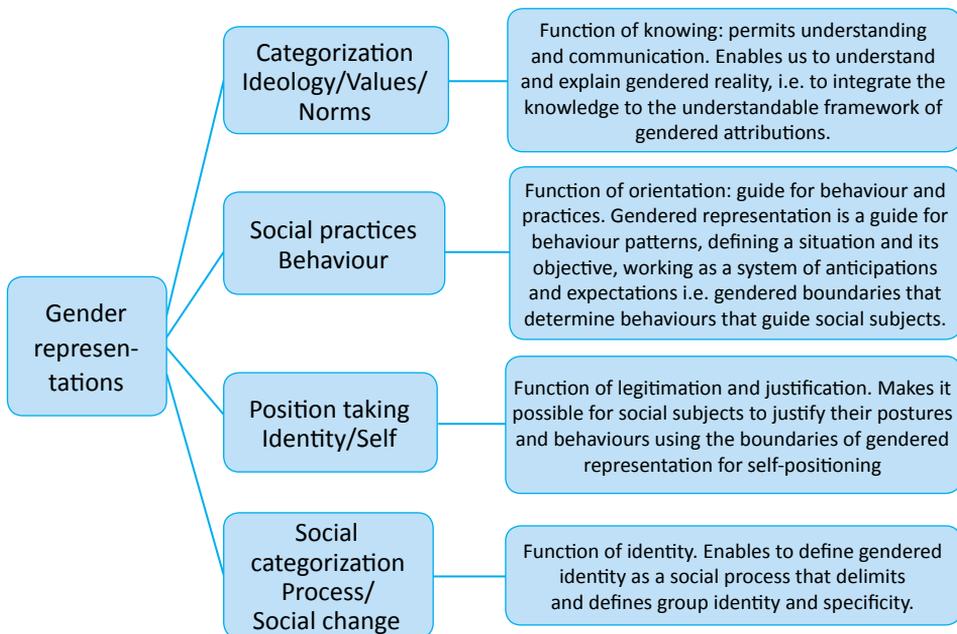


Figure 1. Functions of social representations of gender in the context of the socio-dynamic paradigm. *Source:* Author’s compilation based on Jodelet 2008 and de Rosa 2013.

Figure 1 shows the link between gender representations and their implications for the construction of gendered knowledge. It is a dynamic process that involves the categorisation of the norms and values of the gender system that influences social practices and behaviour and therefore creates a link with positioning, identity and social change in gender representations. This process includes several mutual connections between the subject and the representational system, between the self and identity, between the individual and the collective, between interaction and communication, between contents and processes, and finally, between traditions and change.

## **1.2. Transformations in society**

### **1.2.1. 'Transition' and 'transformations'**

It's important to discuss the concepts 'transition' and 'transformations'. The most common way to conceptualise the paths and outcomes of changes in post-socialist societies is through the paradigm of transition, which is an institutionally framed and planned process of social, economic and political changes targeted at a rationally chosen positive outcome or collectively imagined end state. According to several authors (e.g. Norkus 2012 and Lauristin et al 2018), the concept 'transition' does not fully address the issue of the different pace of development or a variety of outcomes of transformations in different countries. Not all Central and Eastern European countries have advanced at the same speed; in some of them the transition is considered to be over, while in others it is still going on. Using the concept of transition raises questions, such as where we are on our path and when we will reach the goal, so that we can say that the transition is over. To avoid this kind of teleological rootedness, and static comparison of the periods before and after the transition, later research (e.g. Lauristin et al 2018) suggests using the concept 'social transformations', a process that has no particular start or end, nor uniquely identifiable and measurable aims. The concept of social transformations does not foresee a unidirectional way to the future, but refers to several different paths, not all of which terminate at the same end point (Norkus 2012), but let us see the rearrangements, reconfigurations and recombinations that yield a new interweaving of modern society (Helemäe & Saar 2011). This involves the changes in the whole system of social, political, economic and cultural relations, as well as changes in social interactions and in individual lives, which simultaneously or in a certain sequence lead to changes in society. From here also comes the use of the plural form – *transformations* – to emphasise the diversity and interrelatedness of transformation processes (Lauristin et al 2018).

This conceptual difference between the terms 'transition' and 'transformations' is especially important in providing analytical tools for understanding the complexity and multiplicity of social transformations. The post-socialist transition process is far more complicated than just a shift from an authoritarian

centrally planned economy to a market-based Western democracy. It includes several parallel and related transformations (Lauristin 2003, Trumm 2011). In the case of post-socialist transformations we cannot just speak of the transition from an authoritarian system to a democratic society, but must also include globalisation and rapid changes in modern scientific and technological fields (Kolodko 2002).

The multiplicity and complexity of social transformations does not help to form a very clear picture for analytical purposes. On the one hand, transformations include the unequal development of different aspects of society. Besides economic and political reforms, changes in cultural values and ideological beliefs are often forgotten or regarded as mere by-products of the transition. The different pace of development of different domains as part of transformations deserves much more attention than it has received. On the other hand, there are no particularly clear-cut phases of transformations. Different processes that describe a transformation may overlap, but can also follow parallel lines of development. For example, post-socialist transformations have often been described as processes of catching-up, which mostly involves an unrealistic tempo for achieving quality of life comparable to that of Western countries, which did not undergo socialist transformations (Toots 2013), especially since the whole world is in the process of rapid changes due to technological and cultural transformations. This dilemma of changes in post-socialist countries, stated metaphorically by Norkus (2015) as a parallel process of catching up versus falling behind (Norkus 2015) in the rapidly changing world, is often forgotten.

In the context of studying the dynamics of gender representations, the most important reason to use the word ‘transformations’ is to emphasise the multiplicity and simultaneity of the changes in post-socialist countries, including Estonia, which influence the whole system of social, political, economic and cultural relations, as well as changes in social interactions and individual lives (Lauristin *et al* 2018). Such a multi-layered process is full of contradictions and unpredictability, which is particularly important when studying change and stability in gender representations and the role of different social agents in constructing, re-constructing and changing gender representations.

### **1.2.2. Acceleration of time in modern societies**

Another aspect of transformations that needs to be considered is acceleration in modern societies. This concept refers to a wide-ranging speed-up of all kinds of technological, economic, social and cultural processes. The speeding-up of life is connected to the threshold of modernity and the limited span of human life. The prospects of accelerating our ability to have different experiences and thus to exhaust the available possibilities is extremely seductive. The more we can accelerate our ability, for example, to go to different places, see new things, and learn new activities, the less incompatibility there is between the possibilities of

experience we can realise in our lifetimes, and the closer we come to truly 'fulfilling' our lives. Several studies have shown that this clearly is the case in former Soviet countries, where opportunities were limited and time appeared to be, for the most part, 'static', and where after the fall of the Soviet regime the system changeover was perceived as a massive acceleration process (Rosa 2013, Sakwa 2013). New opportunities were thereby opened up for individuals, but the compulsion to adapt and the pressure of keeping up with the pace of transformations rose as well. The threat of not being able to keep up with changes and thus losing out on opportunities produces an immediate pressure to heighten the pace of life, or in other words, 'to stay current'. This leads to a temporalisation of life, to an understanding of one's own life as a project. These 'intrinsic temporalities' do not proceed at the same speed, which leads to desynchronisation and disintegration in society (Rosa 2013). This process is the easy way, leading to the value preferences and codes for behaviour of individual actors, where social differentiation is based on individual 'success' or 'failure' in a specific 'transition culture' (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2009).

Acceleration and temporalisation have significant effects on individuals and their social interactions. It is clearly a paradox, pointed out by Rosa (2013), that although technological acceleration reduces the time needed for everyday activities and this should entail an increase in free time and in turn slow down the pace of life, time is still abundant and the acceleration of the pace of life is an everyday reality. This has a direct impact on gender, especially on how men and women organise their working and non-working lives in households (Wajcman 2008). The change to a 24/7 society has extended the range of potential working hours, and internet access has extended the range of locations from which work can be carried out, which means that the boundaries between work and life are becoming blurred. Furthermore, as the boundaries of the working day have become increasingly unclear, many workers are expected to work long hours to demonstrate commitment and tackle deadlines because of the unpredictable nature and flow of work (Perrons 2003). Such long work hours pose problems mostly for women, who are often the main caregivers, which creates gender differences in time pressure.

Another aspect in terms of gendered time use is connected with the often discussed 'squeeze' of women's time due to the 'double-burden' of paid and unpaid work. According to Bittman and Wajcman's (2000) study in OECD countries, there is little difference in the number of minutes men and women spend in paid work. The crucial issue is the 'quality' of time, or in other words, whether there is a tendency to perform more tasks simultaneously. It turns out that men enjoy more uninterrupted leisure time, while women's leisure is more fragmented, conducted in the presence of children and subject to interruptions by domestic work. Such increasing pressure on the quality of time leads to the question of the quality of social bonds. Lash (2002) argues that technological and social changes are giving way to transient social interactions that are immediate, yet distanced. Increasing (technological) mediation of social relations means that social bonds have become stretched in terms of space, but

compressed in time, leading to an accelerated form of sociability. This is clearly expressed in changes in socialisation patterns, for example in the emergence of ‘intensive parenting’ norms involving a stronger sense among parents that time with children is never sufficient, regardless of actual time devoted to children. Parents feel obligated to spend as much time with their children as possible and express the belief that time is the ‘ultimate parental resource’, to which children have ‘unlimited rights’ (Thorpe and Daly 1999).

### **1.3. Estonia: transformations in a post-Soviet/totalitarian society**

Since regaining its independence in 1991, Estonia has gone through multiple economic and societal reforms. Like other Central and Eastern European countries, Estonia is considered to be one of the countries that followed the most radical and in many ways most successful reforms (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2009). The ‘success story’, largely measured by good macroeconomic performance and political stability, as well as fast technological changes, i.e. ‘internetisation’, in Estonia, has led to the perception of the country as the ‘shining star of the Baltics’ (Hansen and Sorsa 1994) and the widely used phrase ‘new Baltic tiger’ (Trumm 2011).

However, behind the shining facade, developments in Estonian society are full of contradictions. Fast economic growth, excellent employment levels, and a thriving digitalisation process have been accompanied by inequalities, poverty and social fragmentation (Heidmets 2007). In the case of Estonia, several authors (e.g. Kennedy 2002 and Lauristin & Vihalemm 2009) have referred to a specific ‘transition culture’ stressing competitiveness, ‘Westernness’ and orientation to success that has provided support for the liberalist agenda and has taken the perspectives of most successful social actors and framed them as ‘self-evident aims’ for the whole society. In doing so, it has legitimised approaches that prioritise the economic dimensions of the reform while downplaying their social implications and reducing them to ‘individual failures’ (Kennedy 2002), thereby producing inequalities between the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of the transformations and highlighting the individual’s responsibility for social mobility (Lauristin 2003).

Rapid and constant changes have largely influenced the value system and created instability and disruptions in Estonian society. As stated by the famous economic historian and social philosopher Karl Polanyi in his concept ‘double movement’, the development of capitalism consists of the progressive implementation of the market principle as the organising principle of the economy, which entails a simultaneous reduction of ‘social control’ over economic processes. According to Polanyi, this results in the spontaneous desire of society at various levels to protect itself against the destabilising effects of the processes that create the ‘market economy’ and ‘market society’, and which produce the disintegration of social structures (Polanyi 2001: 130–134 [1944]). Such dis-

embeddedness of social structures is like stretching a giant elastic band. Efforts to bring about greater autonomy in society increase the level of tension. With further stretching, the band may snap, leading to social disintegration, whereas society at various levels reacts against the 'dislocations' and the disruption of traditional social institutions (Block 2001). Viviana Zelizer (2005) and others (e.g. Hochschild 2003; Vogler 2005) have argued that instrumental values of market society prevent individuals from forming durable bonds with others and cause a decline in feelings of solidarity and reciprocity, which results in reducing cohesion and integration in society.

The transition from the Soviet era rhetoric to a post-Soviet frame of reference involved a shift in the normative hierarchy of values. Abstract notions of universal solidarity, cooperation, collective interests and other social values were replaced by the priority of such individualistic values as individual interest, individual effectiveness, success, competition and particular group interests. People faced with a post-socialist reality devalued former ideals (fraternity, solidarity, equality etc.) and adopted a value pattern that is better suited to the adaptation to the harsh reality of early capitalism (Raudsepp, Tart and Heinla 2013). This also influenced values related to gender equality and gender representations in society. As general values largely prioritise success, economic well-being and individual development, which are related to working, earning and spending money, this does not support the universalisation of gender roles. As such, the majority of Estonians share rather clear views on 'normal' masculinity and femininity. This is vividly expressed in the multiple and often ambiguous inequalities between men and women. In spite of women's higher level of education compared with men, women are still over-represented in the lower paid education, health and social care sectors and have rather marginal positions in management and political leadership. Women are also mainly responsible for domestic chores and are generally 'naturalised' as caregivers for young children. On the other hand, men are characterised by poor health and high risk-taking behaviour, which result in men's significantly lower life expectancy than women: the gap is approaching ten years (Pajumets 2012).

It is noteworthy that although the Estonian transition is often presented as a 'return to Europe' or even a 'return to normality' (Helemäe and Saar 2011), this has not been very true regarding social outcomes. According to Inglehart and Welzel (2015), the value shift from materialist, survival values to self-expression values (including gender equality) that happened largely in advanced Western societies and later to some extent in post-communist Central European countries did not occur in Eastern Europe, including Estonia. The particularly low interest in gender equality can be explained by the desire to leave behind the Soviet era and integrate into the Western family of nations. The discredited Soviet rhetoric of gender equality, which masked deep-seated gender inequalities (Marling 2010), forced people to choose the opposite: gender equality is seen as a far-fetched issue that is not a problem for the majority. The ideas of gender equality and feminism are suspect, seen as 'alien, dangerous and unnecessary imports from the West' and are fought against, presumably for the

sake of the 'progress' of the nation, creating a context where feminism became a scapegoat for various social ills and a means of distracting attention from deep-seated gender inequalities in the society but, possibly, also other social concerns (Marling 2010). Therefore, studying the dynamics of gender representations and outcomes is a matter of a broader understanding of social transformations.

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW**

### **2.1. Gender representations as subjects of multi-method research: valuing objective and subjective knowledge**

In general, the essence of a research project is questioning and looking systematically and openly for the answers to questions. The aim of social representations research is to examine the ways in which individuals within social groups make sense of the world around them, and how these understandings change, develop, interact and so on. Duveen and Lloyd (1990) argue that studying social representations requires different levels of understanding: firstly, how representations become active for the individual, or in other words, exploring how an individual 'grows' into existing representations within society, secondly, how representations circulate and are active at the broader level of society and how they develop, change and interact with each other, and thirdly, how representations are evoked and discussed at the interactional level. These processes influence the transmission of social representations from one generation to the next and the diffusion of social representations throughout society. Similarly, they are involved in the construction of new representations and changes in old ones (Purkhardt 2015).

Although originally the attempt to investigate the genesis of social representations was about studying changes in knowledge, values and lifestyles in the adult world (Moscovici 2000), the change in social representations is elucidated most clearly in studies examining the development of the child in relation to the social and cultural environment. In order to understand how social reality is transformed, it is important to see how the social transmission of knowledge and values from one generation to the next during the socialisation of the child involves a dynamic process of interaction between the child and various elements of the environment. Understanding information about children and several aspects of the socialisation process is especially important, because children play an active role in the internalisation of social representations, both in their social interactions with adults and in the social environments created by adults (Purkhardt 2015). As pointed out by Duveen and Lloyd (1990), the development and transmission of gender representations are traced through interpersonal relations between the parent and child, the child's interaction with various toys and the behavioural expressions of 'maleness' and 'femaleness' in interactions with peers. Social representations exist before the child's entrance into the social world and in this sense have ontological significance in the child's social reality, but the child does not simply absorb or learn the prevalent social representations. Rather, through their own activities, their interactions with other people and objects, children actively reconstruct the social aspects of themselves, of others and of objects in their environment.

Turning to more concrete methodological aspects of studying the representations of gender, it seems inevitable that to encompass different aspects and

levels of this phenomenon, we need a methodology that includes the micro-macro perspectives of research foci. In fact, it should incorporate the micro-macro continuum, including both objective and subjective levels of social analysis. This notion derives from Helmut Wagner's (1964) idea of the continuum from large-scale to small-scale sociological theories. It covers the scope of sociological thinking in a way that lets sociologists divide up the work of studying social reality and, specifically, to explore the infinite complexity of the social world. Since Durkheim, the levels of social analysis have been seen as part of a continuum and the collective consciousness as being an independent, determinate macro-subjective system, at the same time remaining aware of its ties to the micro-subjective level, where it is 'realised' through individual consciousness (Ritzer 2001). Similarly, authors who have contributed to the social representation theory (e.g. Wagner and Hayes 2005, and Bauer and Gaskell 2008) argue that research should combine micro-level and macro-level analysis. This combination is important, as going beyond the micro level helps us to embrace the social context that gives rise to micro-level phenomena and then explore the transformative mechanisms that capture how the micro level contributes to changing the macro level, the social context, therefore also explaining social change. In analysing social change, the central problem is how to relate the large-scale social, political, economic and technological transformations in society to everyday changes in an individual's life. In the context of social transformations, individuals play a part by creating, changing, resisting and adapting to social changes. The study of these processes requires the awareness of discursive interactions as well as of the positioning and boundaries of social representations. Research should investigate whether there are flexible boundaries that allow for many different positions to be taken or whether the boundaries are sharply drawn and immutable, making stepping out of them and taking different positions extremely difficult or even impossible.

Another argument raised by feminist theorists for using a micro-macro approach turns attention to the challenge for gender research of linking different strands of knowledge in order to explore intersectionality, i.e. the simultaneous operation of gender, age, class, sexuality and other differences. The hierarchies and power lines of these categories are connected and embedded in all social institutions and revealing them requires a multidimensional methodological approach (Hesse-Biber 2007).

To reveal the complexities and challenges of gender representations, my thesis uses several quantitative and qualitative methods in order to consolidate the linkages on different levels. Here I turn to the concept 'triangulation' to provide more details about different combinations and to look at how these are related to the research outline of my thesis. Triangulation was originally introduced to social research by the sociologist Norman Denzin (1978). It involves combining several approaches in the study of a phenomenon or of several aspects of it. Denzin mentioned triangulation on four levels: of different researchers, of various sorts of data, and of different theories, and methodological triangulation: the combination of two or more independent methods divided *between*

methods of triangulation, for example using two qualitative methods, or *within* methods of triangulation, when several approaches are combined in one method. As Flick *et al* (2014) point out, in studying social representations, triangulation can be fruitful in various ways. For example, if social representations as a phenomenon include the views of various groups (for example children's and parents' perspectives in **Study III** and **Study IV**), then we may need to use several methods to study it. Similarly, we can use a more comprehensive empirical approach to study the social representation of a complex phenomenon. The triangulation of several theoretical perspectives can provide a more comprehensive theoretical foundation for combining these methods (multi-step analysis following discourse theories and positioning theories in **Study I**). Of course, methodological triangulation can also include linking qualitative and quantitative methods through their mutual correspondence (as presented in **Study IV**).

## **2.2. Challenges for the research of gender representations**

Social representations always have a relational and social character: a representation is always the representation of something to somebody. According to this perspective, the social subject is seen as situated and agentic and this poses challenges for research and emphasises the researcher's position in social representation studies. Studying social representations enables us to have access to and reveal the components of culture and their relation to social practices. Representations are constituted in the world of cultural matrices, where thought emerges in a relation that cannot separate the researcher and his/her position from the study of representations. The researcher situates herself or himself before the studied object and is influenced by it as 'being part of the same representational field' (Duveen 2001).

Gender, as an analytical concept, is a cultural construction of sex, and is therefore connected with cultural and social meanings of it. Adopting a gender perspective in research requires being aware that a gender system does not exist separately from the social practices of its individuals and groups. These shared meanings and practices do not operate in a vacuum, but take place and change through human interactions, which also happens in the interaction between the researcher and researched. Therefore, to minimise bias, the researcher should be aware of the process of self-reflexivity, which means being explicit about one's own position in the research process and the relationships and interactions with informants. The aim is not to eliminate the researcher's position, but to maintain reflexive consciousness through focusing on the research agenda and revealing the researcher's place throughout the whole research process (Guba and Lincoln 2008).

Looking at gendered reality from the perspective of social representations means becoming aware of the process of knowledge construction and therefore keeping in mind the dual tension of knowledge as pre-established and knowledge

in the making. Therefore, the role of the researcher is to take a particular stand before the object of research (taking into account agentic subjects), to see the knowledge generation process as direct, shared and dialogical (not top-down or bottom-up), and to acknowledge the variety of elements, meanings and practices in the research process (not only hegemonic or dualistic stances) (Wagner and Hayes 2005). This is important in incorporating research in the context of the theory of social representations, as well as linked with critical and transformative potential and the commitment of social sciences.

### 2.3. Data and methods

In order to cover the different aspects of gender representations and at the same time to tackle the methodological complexities introduced in the previous paragraph, the methodological basis of my thesis is multidimensional. I use quantitative and qualitative data from different research projects with multiple types of research methods, which include the operationalisation of several theoretical and analytical modes of methodologies (see Table 1).

**Study I** employs material from interviews with female scientists conducted in the framework of the EU 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme project BASNET (*Baltic States Network: Women in Sciences and High Technology*) (see more about the project in Satkovskiene 2007). Interviews were completed in the Baltic states, Poland and Romania, but for the purposes of **Study I** only Estonian interviews were used. In Estonia, interviews were conducted in 2006 with twenty female scientists between the ages of 22 and 69 in different fields. The sampling strategy aimed to include women with doctoral or master's degrees holding different positions in academia (lecturers, researchers and professors) and having at least two years of work experience in their positions. In order to take a closer look at the position-taking processes in the context of gender representations, the methodological approach followed Laclau's and Mouffe's discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) which sees positions as parts of discursive processes. The authors claim that there are no objective rules for dividing people into different groups in society, but this is determined by discursive processes that restrict the number of available options. Analysing the structural mechanisms of gender shows how dominant discourses shape positioning practices by accepting and conforming, as well as by resisting and challenging the discourse. Following Laclau's and Mouffe's theory, a three-step analysis was carried out, first by selecting specific expressions that could be identified as the key domains of the discourse or discourses, paying attention to how gender was constructed in terms of success, excellence, career and power discourses in the context of academia. Next, the overlapping of these domains was identified to examine the struggle over meaning between discourses. And finally, the process of women accepting versus challenging, as well as perceiving the boundaries of, positions in the context of gender representations was studied.

**Study II** is based on data from the third wave of the survey Me. The World. The Media (conducted in 2008). The survey included Estonians aged 15 to 74 years, with a total sample size of 1507 respondents. The sampling strategy involved a proportional model of the general population (urban/rural division), and multi-step probability random sampling (according to the size of the settlement, followed by random sampling of households and individuals) was used. Additionally, a quota was applied to include the proportions of the ethnic majority and the minority (according to the preferred language of the survey interview: Estonian or Russian). The survey used a face-to-face interviewing method. **Study II** closely examined the ambivalent nature of transformations in Estonian society, including the role of gender in the patterns of social stratification. This helped to determine how gender representations were reflected in people's status and position characteristics in Estonia. In **Study II**, patterns of internet use were analysed by comparing online activities in different socio-demographic groups (including measures of age, gender, ethnicity, education, income and perceived social status). First, the classification of online activities through a factor analysis proposed the two-factor structure of 'social media and entertainment-related internet use (SME)' and 'work and information-related internet use (WI)'. This relatively simple and stable factor structure corresponds well to two aspects of an information environment: the personal/relational aspect and institutional aspect (Lievrouw 2001). After finding factor scores, a series of statistical analyses with different socio-demographic characteristics were conducted. Descriptive analysis and correlations between the characteristics of internet use and socio-demographic factors, as well as indicators of social status, were followed by linear regression analyses to observe more clearly the interactions between different types of internet use and socio-demographic variables, which helped to reveal the patterns of social stratification and categorisation in the context of transformations.

**Studies III and IV** used the data from the EU Kids Online project, which surveyed 1000 children ages 9–16 and one of their parents in 25 European countries about many different aspects of children's internet use. The questionnaire went through several preparation, translation and piloting procedures to minimise biases and maximise the comprehensibility and international comparability of the survey. Face-to-face interviews took place during spring and summer 2010 in homes and were completed with supplementary self-completed questionnaires for sensitive questions. Interviews were conducted by specially trained interviewers, employed by a single agency in each of the 25 countries. More information about the methodological details of the survey is provided in Livingstone *et al* (2011) and on [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

**Study III** focused on gender dimensions of online risks and safety, as well as parental mediation of children's internet use in Europe. In my thesis, **Study III** fulfilled the role of broader contextualisation to examine the patterns of gender representations in the cross-national context of children's internet use and their parents' mediation practices. When applied to the Estonian context, it also provided an introduction to a broad spectrum of sensitive discussion topics,

including the links between online risks and opportunities, safety and resilience, as well as parenting practices in the context of children's internet use. With its quantitative analysis, **Study III** examined the information from particularly rich data about boys' and girls' risky online activities and explored to what extent these had caused harm (upsetting and bothering experiences). **Study III** also analysed what kind of resilience and coping strategies children used in unpleasant online experiences and how they perceived the mediation activities of their parents. Besides children's perspectives about parental mediation, questions were asked of the parent most involved in the child's internet use, which mostly turned out to be the mothers or female carers, reflecting the norm that women tend to bear the main responsibility for domestic care-giving (Kalmus and Roolalu 2012). The perspective of parents was also included in the study to examine whether parents differentiated mediation practices between boys and girls.

The methodological approach of **Study IV** was particularly multidimensional and complex, combining a series of quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative part of **Study IV** employed the EU Kids Online data of European countries on gender differences in parental mediation and compared them with several country-level variables and indices, such as the Gender Gap Index, the percentage of male caregivers among respondents, internet penetration, internet usage rates etc. For a more specific analysis of Estonia, **Study IV** took the mean values of different types of mediation activities based on parents' and children's answers and categorized them in compound indices, thus revealing three types of parental mediation strategies: active mediation, restrictive mediation and monitoring and technical mediation. To gain insight into mediation practices in the gender perspective and the interplay of factors that influence Estonian parents' choice of mediation strategies, a series of linear regression models were conducted with several factors, such as socio-demographic variables (including the gender and age of the parent, the age of the child and the socio-economic status of the household), cognitive and psychological variables (including aspects of parents' self-confidence: their ability to use the internet, being able to help the child and believing in the child's self-efficacy) and indices of expectations and experiences of media effects (including parents' internet-related worries, and the child's harmful online experiences).

The qualitative part of **Study IV** used transcripts from two focus group interviews conducted with Estonian parents in 2012 and 2014. The participants in both focus groups were selected by using a strategic sampling procedure to ensure the homogeneity of groups in terms of family composition – having at least one child aged 9–12 – and heterogeneity in terms of the children's gender: five respondents had daughters and ten respondents had sons. Similarly to EU Kids Online survey, where mothers formed the majority of the participants in the survey, the same happened in focus groups where the participants were all women, despite the efforts to achieve a more heterogeneous composition in terms of the parents' gender. The analysis was conducted by using qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000), following the steps of deductive and inductive category assignment regarding the types of parental mediation. Special attention

was paid to hidden agendas, by looking carefully at the topics that were expressed by boys' mothers but were missing in the case of girls' mothers and vice versa.

**Table 1.** Overview of data, methods and links with the research problem of the thesis

	<b>Data</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Links with the research problem of the thesis</b>
Study I	Interviews with female scientists (BASNET, 2006)	Qualitative	Analyses gender representations through discursive self-positioning to reveal the inequalities and power mechanisms created by the dominant gender system in Estonia.
Study II	Survey of the Estonian population (Me. The World. The Media, 2008)	Quantitative	Analyses the paradoxes of transformations in Estonian society to understand the multiplicity and complexity of social changes and how they influenced gender representations.
Study III	Survey of European children and their parents (EU Kids Online, 2010)	Quantitative	Analyses children's internet use, online behaviour and parental mediation in terms of gender to contextualise the patterns and dynamics of gender representations in the context of social changes related to technological transformations.
Study IV	Survey of European children and their parents (EU Kids Online, 2010) Focus groups with Estonian parents (2012, 2014)	Mixed (quantitative and qualitative)	Analyses the socialisation patterns and the role of parent-child relationships in the context of technological transformations, in order to understand the new forms of socialisation patterns and their influence on the dynamics of gender representations.

### 3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 3.1. Setting the scene: positions in the context of gender representations in Estonia

**Study I** analysed the positions of well-educated women in the context of success, career and power discourses as the most pronounced elements of gender representation. It focused on academia to look at what kind of self-positioning strategies women scientists used when they talked about establishing their careers and success from a gender perspective. These self-positions were looked at as ‘strategic acts’ (Harré and Slocum 2003) to analyse the *process* of positioning, meaning either conscious or unconscious reflections of the availability of ‘favourable’ positions fitting with the norms and values of the gender system, as well as reflections of accepting or challenging these positions in terms of how the representations of gender were constructed and reconstructed.

The context of academic institutions was well-suited for the purpose of studying gender representations, as it forms quite a unique and paradoxical organisational system in terms of gender composition. Compared to other European countries, women in Estonia represent 49% of all researchers in universities, which is one of the highest shares in Europe. Besides that, the male-female gap among tertiary educated professionals is also one of the highest in Europe (women outperform men by 14%). However, in looking at gender composition at different levels of academic positions, we saw the opposite: Estonia was at the top of women’s share of lower level academic positions, but had a quite modest position in the share of higher ranking positions (i.e. professors). In addition, this situation had not particularly changed over the years. For example, between 2002 and 2010, women’s presence in the highest ranking positions strengthened in all EU countries except Estonia (She Figures 2012). One of the reasons for women’s high share among research professionals in Estonia was related to their general higher education level compared to men. Another reason may have been related to the remnants of the Soviet science system, which for military purposes promoted mathematics, physics and other sciences and where the share of women was exceptionally high, although still masked by ‘fake’ gender equality as a symbol of social justice and equity. But still, the women’s presence in science-related professions was high in many post-socialist countries. Despite this, the paradox of gender still remained and it was well-worth analysing the deeper roots of this.

Previous studies on women in academia (Velbaum et al 2008, and Lõhkivi 2015) in Estonia showed that an unwelcoming workplace climate and gender segregation influenced women scientists’ identities and adaptation to the work environment significantly. The latter was particularly evident in the case of young female researchers, who experienced difficulties in fitting into the work culture in academia early in their careers. Although science should be a field where quality of work and objective measures are most important, stereotypes have a

great impact on the assessment of results. For example, studies in physics show a strong connection between gender and occupational stereotypes, which present a good scientist in physics as a ‘blacksmith who has strong hands and who is capable and devoted to shaping raw material or repairing different things’ (Velbaum et al 2008). That notion does not leave much room for women to identify themselves with this type of scientists. Furthermore, such stereotypes create a double standard, where men are considered by default to be more professional, while women have to constantly prove it (Lõhkivi 2015). This is also reflected in women’s attitudes about excellence in science, where women perceive high standards and almost unreachable goals that seem to push them off the top of the list of scientists (Talves and Laas 2008).

**Study I** in my thesis revealed different self-positioning strategies that in one way or another are stances or coping strategies for pushing back against the domination of patriarchal structures. At the same time, these positions clearly show the boundaries of gender hierarchies in the representational field. One of the positions that women take is related to the specificity and visibility of gender issues in an organisation and it refers to notable ‘gender neutralisation’ in topics related to gender in the workplace, i.e. gender discrimination, gender inequality, work-life balance, career breaks, having children, career progress etc. For example, a discussion of career and promotion possibilities ended with the apparent denial of workplaces being gendered, stating that there is no difference between men and women, and that success depends on everyone’s personal characteristics rather than gender. The same pattern is apparent in discussions of work-life balance, denying the influence of children and family life on a woman’s career. This kind of communication relates to issues of identity and ‘face work’ and such gender neutrality is based on implicit presuppositions in the meaning-making system (Valsiner 2003) regarding social representations of gender. Presumably, hiding gender is most apparent in demanding workplaces and in the context of work-centred and masculine organisation culture, which is definitely the case in academia, as well as in society in general. In a similar vein, using the rhetoric of personal responsibility marks a coping strategy of ignoring gender inequality or even discrimination, because it is socially demanding and troublesome to deal with it and oppose the prevailing gender system (Kantola 2008). On the other hand, the rhetoric of personal responsibility is deeply rooted in the mindsets of Estonian people in terms of the strong individualistic orientation in achieving success (Lauristin 2003). However, this kind of structural obstacle in the gender system creates a vicious circle that through promoting individual responsibility undercuts the agency for social change, and in work-related situations obscures the creation of a more egalitarian organisational model.

Another type of positioning that even more deeply reflects the power dynamics of gender representations is *trivialisation*. This involves positions where women express their achievements and career as being less valuable and trivial. This incorporates the elements of minimisation and pseudo-opposition, as well as passive (deleting agency) and de-personalised expressions (Wodak *et*

al 1999). For example, women in top positions often express their discomfort in talking about their success and achievements or try to minimise their own active roles in their career creation. Such a strategy creates a professional identity where women seem to voluntarily settle for lower positions (Husu 2004), thus continuously reinforcing women's marginality in society and feeding the stereotype of women's *own* preference for lowering their career ambitions. Another part of trivialisation involves the establishment of unachievable criteria for career success. It should be mentioned that the word 'career' takes on a kind of mythological aura and women are clearly uncomfortable using it. Through trivialisation women set high and sometimes even irrelevant goals, while making personal achievements seem less valuable. Such trivialisation clearly reflects the general unfavourable attitude towards women in high positions in Estonian society. Both men and women prefer to work under male supervisors (Helemäe and Vöörmann 2006). Additionally, gender stereotypes create different standards for evaluating women compared to men, which in turn makes women feel that they have to work twice as hard as men or they are not good enough. Such reinforcement of 'double-proof' standards creates barriers for women in reaching higher positions, as well as in valuing their work, especially in traditionally male-dominated workplaces.

Positioning and the availability of positions are also revealed in the interaction between different and conflicting discourses. This process either supports or restricts the availability of different options. Hence, another positioning strategy, called *superiority strategy*, shows the ways women react to alternative position taking that do not correspond to the dominant gender representation system. The superiority strategy is strongly linked to generational differences and to the normative boundaries between older and younger, experienced and less-experienced (i.e. beginning) women scientists. Such power lines intermingle with gender representations in the discourse of power and ambition and create a certain superior position taking. For example, in a discussion about women's careers, ambition was presented as objectionable and prohibited for women, particularly in terms of younger, less-experienced female colleagues. Another aspect of superiority reflects the tensions of major and continuous institutional reforms in academia (Aaviksoo 2003, and Velbaum *et al* 2008) that make career and life planning difficult, as well as commonly producing the feeling of unfairness in terms of workload, advancement and recognition in academic organisations. Especially older generations feel a strong commitment to diligent work culture to create success, which does not allow them to easily accept modern career practices that support career breaks and more flexible work-life balance models.

**Study I** showed that positions created in the context of gender representations and gendered structures in workplaces quite expressively support the dominant gender order. Through taking the position of being less valuable or trivial in their work, women silently accept their inferior position in the workplace and in society in general. The explanation for why there was so little resistance to the dominant gender system may be partly related to the specific

culture of life sciences, where research groups are particularly hierarchical, therefore representing a more rigid and ordered organisational culture, which does not support egalitarian role divisions. By hiding gender or denying the importance of gender in creating hierarchies and inequalities, women also hide the source of inequalities produced by the reproduction of gender representations. It is a paradox that women are expected to remain silent and not cause problems or bring up topics that are troublesome as this makes them unable to challenge or bring about changes in the dominant gender order. Positioning as part of discursive communication practices brings the representations of gender from the micro level to the broader context of understanding gender inequalities and making explicit the sources of power, domination and traditions of gendered structures, which in turn keeps alive and constantly reinforces gender inequalities and gender gaps in our everyday lives.

As seen in **Study I**, positioning involves the intersections of different identities that, besides gender, account for other socio-demographic cleavages. As positioning largely depends on social status, the aforementioned strategies clearly reflect status and position ambiguities in Estonian society, which came under closer examination in **Study II**.

### **3.2. Paradoxes of gender representations in the context of social transformations**

The post-socialist societal changes in Estonia reflected the economy-centred and technology-centred transition culture, highlighted the perspectives of most successful social actors and created success markers for the whole society. Economic success and digital skills became essential standards for adopting the values of the emerging capitalist society, while its social implications were ignored (Lauristin 2003, Heidmets 2007). This process produced multiple, as well as complex and multidimensional, hierarchies in society. **Study II** analysed the implications of technological developments as part of the transformation process, which also included changes in lifestyle and social practices. **Study II** looked at how different aspects of access and use of the internet comply with and also influence the patterns of social stratification in Estonia. It is a paradox that although the transition in Estonia was largely influenced by economic measures, perceived social status was clearly shaped not just by economic factors (e.g. income), but was also dependent on a mixture of demographic predictors, such as age, gender and ethnicity. It is very clear that these predictors did not play a role individually but were intertwined in a process of creating positions in social hierarchies. For example, studies of perceived social status have shown a strong emphasis on ‘youth-oriented society’ (Lindeman 2011), where young people estimate their social positions to be higher compared to other age groups, regardless of education and income. Social status is also influenced by gender and complex inequalities between men and women. Women have, on average, higher education levels than men, but this rarely pays

off because of the high gender pay gap and unbalanced roles in the labour market and at home.

Taking the paradoxes of the multidimensional nature of social status as a starting point, **Study II** focused on the access and patterns of internet use and its influences on social status. This study took into account several socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, income and perceived social status. Next, I will highlight the results concerning patterns of internet use in the gender perspective and their connection with other socio-demographic factors.

First of all, it is evident that the gender gap in access has disappeared compared with previous measurements, where men were significantly more active internet users than women. At the same time, when it comes to the patterns of internet use, which was measured in terms of two factors, “social media and entertainment oriented internet use” (SME) and “work and information related internet use” (WI), significant gender differences appeared. In general, women scored significantly higher than men on WI, whereas men used the internet more than women for SME. When we juxtaposed these differences with age, specific patterns of gender representations were revealed. While SME was the highest among the youngest age group (15–19-year-olds), decreasing continuously throughout the lifespan without significant gender differences in this process, the WI trajectory showed notable differences between men and women. These differences were practically non-existent among 15–19-year-olds, but were particularly notable between the ages of 30 and 54. This reflects the gender system, which favours women’s active participation in the labour market and at the same time associates duties at home and child rearing with females. Such a double burden, which probably is most intensive at the age of parenting, leaves women less spare time compared with men for entertainment-oriented activities. These results support time use surveys in Estonia, showing that women have, on average, 76 minutes less unoccupied time per day than men (Tasuja 2011). Gendered role division in families often assigns institutional duties (banking, filling in forms and applications, communication with institutions etc.) to women. As most of these can be done via e-services in Estonia, this notably increases women’s role in WI.

In examining changes in social practices, a lot of attention has been paid to young people, who are often considered the ‘pioneers of change’, thinking and behaving differently than older generations. On the one hand, this notion derives from the debates of childhood studies and the concept of ‘new childhood’, which sees children as independent social actors in their own lives. It is also influenced by studies of generations and the assumption that changes may occur with generation change. It is especially vivid in the new digital age, where young people are considered to be “digital natives” who will leave older generations, i.e. “digital immigrants” (Prensky 2001) behind to an extent that has never been seen before. Such a robust and labelling categorisation, often criticised as attributing too powerful a role to technology (Kalmus 2016), still reflects the enormous technological saturation of the life-world, which surrounds the

changes in society with anxieties about an unknown and potentially dangerous present and future. Such a process feeds the hype, especially in terms of safety issues in online contexts, without actually seeing the online world as closely related to the offline world, and without turning attention to questions of social shaping and the social consequences of the rapid technological changes in everyday life. From the gender perspective, such technology-related anxieties create constructions which privilege men's and boys' approach to information and communication technologies (Henwood *et al* 2000), while ignoring the social aspects of technology use. At the same time, these anxieties reflect constant alarm about girls' vulnerability on the internet, especially in terms of its sexualised and manipulative content and contacts (Livingstone *et al* 2011).

**Study III** analysed European children's use of the internet and focused on how technological changes shape gender representations. As clearly the internet represents a remarkably important part of young people's lives, it is important to explore the possible threats, as well as the opportunities and positive sides, of internet use. In this context, gender is an important dimension, especially, in terms of to what extent gender might matter with regard to children's internet use, including participating in risky online activities, as well as in gaining resilience through coping strategies if something unpleasant happens on the internet. Starting with the question of the frequency of internet use, it cannot be said that boys are significantly more active users than girls. To some extent, boys and girls do different things online (broadly speaking, girls chat online more, and boys play more games), but at the same time, high immersion in social media culture offers lots of shared experiences for children regardless of gender.

Similarly, considering children's experiences of online risks, the results do not show clear gender differences: overall, four in ten children (40 percent of girls and 41 percent of boys) reported one or more potentially harmful risks (i.e. exposure to pornography, cyberbullying, sexual messaging, harmful content and meeting online contacts offline). Gender differences appeared in the case of some risks visibly related to the different activities that boys and girls do online. For example, more girls than boys visited pro-anorexia websites and there were more boys than girls who had seen sexual images, but contrary to typical worries about girls meeting online contacts offline, no such differences were reported. Considering the prevalence of negative experiences, it needs to be stressed that encountering risks did not necessarily mean harm to the children. Going more deeply into this offers surprising results. For instance, the most prevalent and also most upsetting online risk reported equally by boys and girls was cyberbullying, rather than the widely feared sexual content. Cyberbullying shows that upsetting experiences in children's lives are very often related to close friends or schoolmates, rather than being caused by complete strangers, and there are more links between online and offline environments than expected (Talves and Nunes 2014). However, this does not mean that we should forget dangers that come from the anonymous and rapidly changing online world. In this sense, most of the attention has been paid to sexual content and receiving

messages with sexual meanings. In taking a look at being bothered by sexual content, it was revealed that girls are more bothered by sexual images and receiving sexual messages. This creates the interesting paradox of boys having more contacts with sexual content, but not being as bothered by it as girls, which seems to be due to the normalisation of sexuality as a reflection of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005).

While previously mentioned risks can be described as content specific, we have to keep in mind that the internet provides a space for exploration and experimentation with identities and social relations, which makes children and young people engage in a range of online activities that are not easily classified as risks. There are many things that young people do online which can lead to benefits or harm, depending on the individual and context. Individual agency among young people can lead to both seeking entertainment and exploring risky surroundings, but also being exposed to harmful events. In relation to such risky activities, **Study III** showed that boys are far more active in these than girls. Overall, more boys than girls are excessive internet users and, concerning privacy, it is boys who tend to make their social network profiles public, share private information and contact strangers online that they have not met offline. Looking at the other side of these activities, we may find an explanation in the fact that boys report that it is easier to be themselves on the internet, which may reflect the feeling of being embarrassed in face-to-face interactions. It should be remembered, however, that excessive internet use and risky online activities, such as giving out personal information, are associated with an increase in exposure to sexual content and unwanted contact, which, quite unlike dominant gendered assumptions, can happen with boys as well.

To manage risks and harm regarding internet use, children need to know how to cope with these experiences. Therefore, children's agency and capabilities play a very important role in developing resilience. **Study III** looked at what kind of strategies children use when something bothersome or harmful happened to them on the internet. In general, the usage of different coping strategies did not show clear gender differences, but some aspects still reflected gendered patterns in problem solving: girls being more communicative and boys more passive, especially in potentially more embarrassing (i.e. sexuality-related) experiences. For example, when upset by sexual content, boys tended to hope that the problem would go away. Girls, on the other hand, were more active in talking to somebody, especially in the case of receiving sexual messages and cyberbullying. However, developing resilience also required support and encouragement from more competent social actors, such as parents, whose activities of mediating children's internet use were analysed in another part of **Study III** and **Study IV**.

According to **Study II** and **Study III**, it is clear that technology itself does not bring about changes in social practices or in people's attitudes and habits. The changes may even not depend on the turnover of generations, contrary to the widespread belief that every new generation somehow changes the world. Considering the representations of gender, technology seems to mediate and

widen the range of practices that are shared by users, regardless of gender. Thus, technology creates a platform for exploration, making choices and taking on different roles, but it is difficult to say what changes will occur. Do internet-related communication practices and usage habits change the deepest roots of the social world, including gender representations, or do offline gender roles influence online behaviour as they do other behaviour, and is this likely to continue even when the current generation grows older (Helsper 2010)? Essentially, social changes cannot be attached to simplified explanations of unique social phenomena (such as technology) that induce the changes, but have to be seen as a process occurring through complex interrelations between agents and social structures.

### 3.3. Socialisation as part of the (re)production of gender representations

The way in which social representations structure social reality is most clearly seen in socialisation. Communication, through various forms of social interaction in the socialisation process, creates codes of behaviour for the individual. Gender socialisation is a focused form of socialisation; it is the learning of social expectations and attitudes associated with one's sex, which is most acute in childhood in parent-child interactions. Socialisation, related to social representations, also poses the question of social change, especially in the context of transformations in society. Do parents today have different expectations than their parents had, and do their children have even more different expectations? But also, do new communication practices change the patterns of socialisation? Can we talk about a completely 'new' parenting paradigm in the modern, technology-saturated world? **Study III** and **Study IV** shed light on the socialisation of gender in terms of parental mediation of children's internet use. The concept of 'parental mediation' derives from socialisation theories and has been developed to mark the types of child-rearing techniques, practices and strategies employed in families in the context of children's computer and technology use (Kirwil 2009, Kalmus 2013). Referring to the practices of *mediating* technology to children, parental mediation is seen as a rather new phenomenon, which has been experienced only by the latest generations of parents (Roosalu and Kalmus 2012). This, in turn, makes it more challenging for parents to cope with this novel task and related expectations, but also brings up the question of whether it also changes socialisation patterns and parent-child relationships?

**Studies III and IV** analysed the activities that parents use to supervise their children's internet use. Broadly, the studies divided parental activities into two groups: social support (help, guidance, co-use and co-interpreting) and rules and restrictions (social and technical; Kalmus 2013). According to **Study III**, girls received more of all types of mediation except technical mediation. Although parental mediation is supposed to happen and works better proactively in

reducing the likelihood of risk and harm, in many cases it occurs retroactively, which means that parents take mediation steps after the child has had a negative online experience. This especially applies to the monitoring of the child's internet use, which often takes place when the child has had a negative experience, and is especially visible in attempts at talking about internet safety with girls. It seems that parents are more active at intervening when something has happened to their daughters by introducing safety strategies to prevent further negative experiences. As girls tend to receive more parental mediation, especially in safety-related issues, boys' parents use more restrictions and/or technical mediation or monitoring. At the same time, boys get less active mediation, which is in line with boys' own strategies of coping, with relatively few attempts to talk to somebody about their negative online experiences.

A more specific analysis of parental mediation in Estonia in **Study IV** showed that mediation does not depend purely on the child's gender, but is mixed with other socio-demographic factors, including age and parent-child interactions. Most notably, the child's age plays a role in all types of mediation strategies, with more mediation with younger children and declining mediation as the child gets older. Still, different types of mediation and the child's age interact differently in the case of boys and girls. For example, in the case of active mediation and to some extent in the case of monitoring/technical restrictions, age matters for boys: as boys grow older, parents engage in significantly less active mediation, which is not the case with girls. Parents' age plays an important role in providing active mediation and monitoring/technical restrictions: the older the parents, the less mediation they offer, regardless of the child's gender. Factors that are related to parental confidence (e.g. being able to help the child on the internet, and the belief that the child can cope with negative experiences) apply differently to boys and girls. Parents' confidence in their own abilities quite predictably increases the use of any type of mediation for all children. But if parents believe less in girls' self-efficacy in coping with negative online experiences, they use active and restrictive mediation strategies. Thus, it seems that boys are more often expected to be the 'natural experts' in computer-related issues, thus leading parents to forget the necessity of parental guidance for all children, regardless of gender.

Another part of **Study IV** dealt with the qualitative analysis of Estonian mothers' views of parental mediation from a gender perspective, which shed light on the broader context of gender socialisation patterns. These results support the outcomes of the quantitative analysis described above, but add nuances and accents to the understanding of socialisation in the context of gendered parenting culture. This part of the analysis demonstrated the strong intersection of the child's gender and age as factors influencing parents' behaviour, especially in terms of authoritarian versus liberal approaches to parenting. Gender-age intersections are especially visible in the case of topics that are regarded as most problematic in children's internet use, such as excessive internet use, inappropriate content, safety problems and parents' right to monitor children's online activities.

Worries about children's excessive internet use lead parents to struggle with time management issues. They admit that it is difficult to set clear rules and maintain discipline regarding the time children spend on the internet, as children use the internet mostly on their own smartphones, which are difficult to control. Still, this kind of 'time panic' seems to be more relevant in the case of boys, who are disciplined in a far more authoritarian way, while parental control over girls is far more negotiable and 'floating'. Children's online activities and potentially dangerous internet content are other problematic issues. Most children, regardless of gender, play games, chat with friends, watch videos etc., but parents' acceptance of these activities depends largely on the child's gender. Gaming is considered particularly problematic in the case of boys, especially because of the perceived impact of violent games. In the case of girls, the violent nature of games is downplayed or ignored.

A gender-nuanced picture also appears in activities that are more useful in parents' views and which they encourage their children to take part in as being more 'mature' and doing 'something useful'. Boys tend to be recognised for using the internet for hobbies more than girls, and girls more than boys for practical activities (reading newspapers, preparing documents, etc.). Such reflections of maturity are probably influenced by new ways of defining adulthood in the context of social transformations. Blatterer (2009) has pointed out that structural uncertainties, the demand for flexibility and the openness of future horizons in society imbue the new adulthood with a quality that confounds the conventional understanding of maturity as a goal, which is perpetually liminal and has no definite destination. Therefore, it may be that the boundaries of adulthood have somewhat disappeared and becoming adult-like (i.e. responsible) is expected to happen earlier than ever before. The other side of the coin involves modern childhood and to what extent children's culture influences parent-child relationships (Gill 2007, Corsaro 2015).

Concerning parents' attitudes towards children's online activities, Chambers (2016) stresses that nowadays the extent to which parents accept children's highly technological culture depends on what technology symbolises for them, what kind of threats and opportunities they see in technology and how their own identities mesh with or conflict with these notions. Discourses related to youth culture, technologies and digital activities, especially those related to fear, vulnerability and risk, inform and exist in tensions associated with parents regulating children's digital activities and relate to normative understandings of 'good' parenting practices and 'healthy' media consumption for their children. Heated debates about the 'right' form of parenting, technology hype and aggravated generational differences lead easily to unbalanced use of hard controls and overparenting, or children are left on their own, as parents' belief in their children's technological ability exceeding their own ability has increased tremendously (Livingstone and Helsper 2008). This seems to apply more to boys than girls. Parents tend to have a feeling that their sons should be 'toughened up' through discipline and control to preserve masculinity (Kimmel, Hearn and Connell 2005). On the other hand, and probably this is related to the

context of male-dominated computer culture, boys are expected to become independent and take responsibility earlier than girls, leading to a parental shift to the other side of spectrum with all types of mediation losing their importance especially in the case of older boys.

According to **Study IV**, gender differences in parental mediation are most visible in the case of safety issues. In general, parents admit that there are no clear rules in talking about safety on the internet. Therefore, it seems to be rather hectic and depends on the need, which may arise from a story in a newspaper or a friend who has experienced something unpleasant on the internet. Held mostly with boys, these discussions about internet risks are quite superficial and parents' own attitudes or children's bored reactions towards these talks show that mediation is not successful. Deeper mediation practices of safety are used in the case of girls, where parents give concrete advice, discuss negative incidences with their daughters and keep an eye on their online activities. This means that the monitoring of internet activities is more complicated with girls. Parents check children's activities through 'friending' the child on social networking sites or having access to the child's profile. Monitoring is also strongly age-specific, being more actively used with younger children and stopping at a certain age, especially in the case of boys, when parents say that the child is 'old enough' to be trusted and have the right to privacy.

Previous studies of socialisation values in Estonia show that Estonian parents expect their children to be hard-working, honest, smart and intelligent, therefore supporting traditional values and high academic achievement (Tulviste *et al* 2007). Compared with their Nordic neighbours, Estonians pay less attention to such social values as the child's cheerfulness, sociability and curiosity. These results help to explain parents' expectations of the child's maturity and independence in online and offline contexts as characteristics that are desirable for meeting the demands of dominant paradigms of success in Estonian society. However, parents feel constant pressure, struggling between authoritarian and liberal parenting paradigms in supporting traditional socialisation values, while trying to adapt their parenting practices to rapid changes in society. This also applies to gender representations in socialisation, reflecting paradoxical and unbalanced parental practices. As boys are expected to be experts in technology use and this is transferred to their social skills and ability to cope with risks and harm on the internet, they are not helped to gain resilience or break the traditional masculine gender stereotypes regarding risk-taking and problem-solving. The same applies to girls: putting all the pressure on safety issues reinforces stereotypes of girls' vulnerability, at the same time disregarding other risks, as well as the opportunities that the internet has to offer.

### 3.4. Discussing the change of gender representations in Estonia

Analysing different aspects of gender representations raises the question of how and to what extent social representations are subject to change. In the following paragraph, I will give an overview of some aspects that help to understand the obstacles to and the opportunities for change in Estonian society. I first have to restate the dual functions of social representations, clearly presented in the socio-dynamic paradigm that was described above. Social representations are constituents of culture, giving social agents a common code or a tool to make sense of and navigate in environments. In this sense, representations are the basis for consensus, which creates rules and guides our everyday life. Everything new is anchored in the framework of existing representations. However, representations also provide the means for conflict and contradictions to renegotiate and resolve aspects of our beliefs and behaviours that have become problematic. Such a dual function of social representations in their prescriptive and transformative aspects should also be kept in mind when talking about representations of gender. In this context it is important to discuss whether gender representations in Estonia are changing and how they respond to transformations in society.

First of all, I have to turn back to the theory of social representations, namely, the concept of **essentialism**. According to Wagner et al. (2009), people attribute essence to categories representing a deeper and unchangeable level of reality despite the changes in the appearances of categories. Such 'essentialised' categories are perceived as unchangeable and eternal by nature, as part of the natural order that lies beyond human construal, argumentation and negotiation. In this sense, gender is an essentialised category that presents men and women as inherently different, not only in biology, but also in mentality, behaviour preferences and identity. Essentialism in the context of gender involves creating well-defined boundaries of homogenised behaviour and a moral function to justify and legitimise thoughts, feelings, and actions as natural, which makes them especially difficult to change. In this sense, the results of my thesis support some well-established boundaries that limit changes in gender representations. Especially the positioning process reveals the boundaries set by the structural mechanism of the gender system, therefore creating discourses for settling within instead of moving beyond borders. This, in turn, preserves and reproduces gender representations rather than changing them.

The second factor influencing change in gender representations is **resistance**. This notion stems from social identity dynamics and plays a crucial role in structuring communication at the interpersonal level and cognitive operations at the intra-personal level of analysis. For Duveen (2001), resistance to how one is positioned by others often emerges due to the dual nature of identity, which is not only about identifying oneself, but also about being identified by others. Resistance involves an identity refusing to accept what is proposed by a communicative act, i.e. it refuses to be influenced. Analysing gender representations

in my thesis, especially visible in **Studies I and II**, shows that rapid changes in society create resistance, and accepting transformations is not a smooth process, but depends on different factors and often creates significant inequalities in society. Hiding or denying the role of gender in organisational practices shows the reproduction of structural obstacles and the resistance to tackling gender inequality and changing old gender beliefs. In this sense, resistance is often a kind of coping strategy to avoid talking about problematic topics. Such slow changes in beliefs about gender are exemplified by the misperceptions of Soviet-era 'equality' and 'social justice' discourses, which did not support the development of more egalitarian gender attitudes (Marling 2017). Somewhat paradoxically, resistance may also contain the elements for change. The discussion of gender roles and inequalities in society creates dialogical resistance, which is often present in the context of social movements. Taking into account the fact that identities are not fixed and are structured by difference, resistance may also be reflected in the creation of 'fashion identities' (Davis 2002). Struggling against the traditional values of gender, supporting feminist ideas etc. are parts of the identity project, within which identity and difference are negotiated and renegotiated.

However, if we look more generally at the level of values, gender equality is part of a broader syndrome of tolerance of out-groups, including foreigners, gays and lesbians. According to Inglehart (2006), although overwhelming majorities of the people of former communist societies endorsed democracy as a general goal, they showed much lower levels of support for such underlying qualities as tolerance of out-groups. Acceptance of new or different ways of thinking is influenced by tolerance, which is in turn connected with the dimension of tightness-looseness in a society, which involves the strength, variety and clarity of social norms, and shows the acceptance of deviant or out of norm behaviour. The rise of cultural cohesion in Estonia (Mandel and Realo 2015) is connected with a growing coherence about social norms in Estonian society, but also growing perceptions and expectations about how people should act in most situations, which limit the acceptance of differences in behaviour. On the basis of my thesis, I can conclude that although rapid technological changes do not change people's attitudes, including gender representations, they mediate and widen the range of practices that may lead to a more open, sensitive and perceptive society.

Another keyword that marks the changes in social representations is '**rupture**', which involves the push factors of creating change in social representations. Social representations constitute the collective meanings of social knowledge as familiarised and domesticated objectifications, which produce the ways in which we act. When meanings in social representations are no longer actionable, as in moments of rupture and contradictions, individuals need to reconstitute them so that they can become parts of their everyday worlds (Sartawi 2015). Zittoun et al (2003) claim that transitions always involve (re)constructions of meanings, which are marked by a link between rupture and (re)continuity. This involves the bi-directionality of social processes: either the transformations lead to some resolution so that old ways can continue, or the

transformations lead to the development of a new formation that provides a better adjustment to a given social and material situation.

My thesis analyses whether transformations in society, such as the rapid spread of technologies and their influences on society, can be a kind of ‘rupture’ or a push factor that induces changes in gender representations. This leads us to the issues of socialisation and inter-generational change in values. Based on Inglehart, Kalmus and Vihalemm (2008) argue that individuals are more likely to adopt those values that are consistent with their own experience during their formative years and reject values that are inconsistent with this experience, and since younger generations have been socialised under significantly different conditions than older generations, the values of society will change through inter-generational replacement. The results of my thesis suggest that a change in generation itself does not create changes in representations. Indeed, there is evidence of quite different conditions of socialisation, compared with previous generations, mainly influenced by technological temporalisation of society, but even this does not lead to unidirectional change. Instead, we can see a more ambivalent and paradoxical picture of changes. As Sztompka (2004) points out, this can be most clearly described as parallel processes, where symbols, values and identities brought in by new cultural flows exist in parallel with old traditions, values and identities, which makes the changes ambivalent. Members of society who are faced with the challenge of coping with the ambivalence of a new situation may refer to both old and new cultural pools.

My thesis explored the dynamics of gender representations in the context of Estonian social transformations. The main focus was on the changes in Estonian society in the context of rapid technological and cultural changes, looking more closely at the changes in socialisation and parenting practices as impetuses to change gender representations. Nevertheless, my thesis did not pay much attention to general socialisation agents, namely the education system, media and peers, which also play significant roles in gender socialisation. For example, studies conducted in Estonian schools show that the evaluation of school performance and behaviour depends on the child’s gender. While boys face lower requirements to perform well in school, expectations for girls are much higher in regard to behaviour and grades. These differences affect children’s self-perception. Girls strive to perform better in school even when they know that they are doing well (Kuurme 2016). Thus, although parents’ values and behaviour patterns are probably among the most influential representational models, the interaction with other agents of socialisation needs to be addressed in further studies to examine the roots of gender representations and opportunities for change in them.

Another aspect that needs more attention is the range of occupational fields, in order to study gender segregation and positioning. My thesis looked at female professionals’ self-positioning strategies in academia and probably quite similar results could be found with high-ranking women in other sectors; still, it is well worth widening the examination to other fields: ICT, technology, finances, entrepreneurship etc.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of my thesis was to examine some aspects of the dynamics of gender representations in the context of multiple transformations in Estonian society.

Social representations are always and necessarily embedded in the wider cultural system of local meanings and social relationships. Gender-related symbols and interaction practices are hidden in many ways, but they represent the viability of gender representations, showing the patterns of gender hierarchies and inequalities in society.

The results of my thesis revealed the struggle between the inflexibility and fluidity of meanings of gender as described by West and Zimmermann (1987). Both change and stability in gender representations clearly reflect the overall trajectories of transformations in Estonian society. The ambivalent and unbalanced changes in society are reflected in the mindsets of people and do not allow clear and undirected solutions leading to understanding, contextualising and explaining gender representations. The novel aspect of my thesis was to show the links between the dynamics of the society, with its rather complex developmental context, and the dynamics of gender representations, a highly perplexing area in the sense of producing change.

The main conclusions of the thesis are presented in terms of the structure of the objectives and research questions.

### **I Gender representations from the perspective of female professionals. Meanings of gender and gender representations through the process of discursive self-positioning (Study I)**

#### **What kind of positions are created in the context of gender representations, and do these positions support or challenge the dominant representations of gender?**

Positioning, as an interactional and discursive process, exposes the hierarchies and power disparities of the traditional gender system. It reveals the hidden structure of the gender system and the boundaries of gender hierarchies in the representational field. In this sense, it is important to understand the variety of functions of positioning, especially in looking at the question of change *vs* persistence of gender representations. The results of my thesis (**Study I**) show that traditional gender roles and gender hierarchies in Estonia are deeply rooted, especially in organisational cultures with strong masculine identities. It is seen in women's self-positioning in organisational and work-related contexts, where, firstly, the positioning fulfils the function of **preserving the status quo** and does not challenge dominant gender norms. In such a way, positioning leads to seeking 'favourable' positions suitable to the perceptions of the dominant gender system. Secondly, as social representations of gender mark out positions that offer viable gender identities that are consistent with the norms and values of the system, fitting in is a **coping mechanism** for ignoring gender inequality

or even discrimination. It is especially important in highly demanding and highly competitive organisational culture. Social representations often exist in the middle of interactions of different mechanisms; gender representations are also influenced by occupational and organisational perceptions and norms. Thirdly, and somewhat paradoxically, positioning may also fulfil the role of **challenging the dominant gender order** and show the availability of different positions. However, challenging gender representations remains subtle or hidden, while making explicit the importance of power and ambition as characteristics of Estonian work culture, and this is also linked with generational differences and normative boundaries of age, position and work experience in the organisation.

### **What role does gender play in the statuses and identities of people in society?**

The process of positioning means conscious or unconscious reflections of the boundaries of the norms and values of the gender system as well as reflections of accepting or challenging these boundaries. For women, positioning helps to create **professional identities**, which involve avoiding competitive and resistant positions, with less aggressive behaviour and conforming strategies. Women prefer to remain invisible, and to avoid direct competition and confrontation with issues that are outside the normative boundaries. Another, broader level of identity creation is related to gender roles and statuses in society. As the dominant values in society are perceived to be very materialistic and career-oriented, women try to **hide their female identity** related to family responsibilities, career breaks and struggles with work-life balance. Instead they choose to adopt the norms set by male-dominated work culture and not to be seen as weak and in need of support that can be linked to family responsibilities (**Study I**).

### **What kind of inequalities are produced through the reproduction of gender representations?**

Positioning as part of discursive communication practices brings the representations of gender from the micro level to a broader context of understanding gender inequalities and making explicit the sources of power, domination and traditions of gendered structures, which in turn keep alive and constantly reproduce the gender inequalities and gender gaps of our everyday lives. The reproduction of gender representations **preserves the domination of male-oriented work culture**, as well as gender inequalities in society. Ignoring or denying the topics related to gender inequality and discrimination and making this a 'personal issue' weakens the possibilities of social change and the creation of a more egalitarian gender system. Additionally, gender representations create **different standards** with which to evaluate women compared with men, which for women creates the feeling that they are not good enough and have to work much harder to keep up with men. Such a reproduction of 'double-proof' standards creates barriers for women in reaching higher positions as well as in finding value in their work. Through taking the position of being less valuable or trivial in their work, women silently accept their inferior position in the workplace and in society.

## **II Gender representations from the perspective of social status and stratification. Paradoxes of gender representations in the context of social transformations (Study II and Study III)**

### **How do transformations in society shape the representations of gender?**

The results show that although societal and technological transformations influence social status and identity (**Study II**) and divide habits and life cultures (**Study III**), they also **create multiple paradoxes** in understanding gender as a central factor in the context of societal changes. The emerging information society includes changes in lifestyle and social practices, which influence the gender system. Mixed with different factors, such as age, ethnicity and the complex notion of social status, gender does not play a stand-alone role, but is part of the process of creating positions in social hierarchies. Furthermore, considering the **change in gender representations**, technology itself does not bring about changes in social practices and people's attitudes, nor do the changes solely depend on the turnover of generations. Instead, technology seems to mediate and widen the range of practices that are shared by all people, regardless of gender. However, it is **difficult to say what changes what**. It is possible that genders are seen as essentially different and unchangeable by nature (Wagner et al. 2009) and resist the transformative aspects that may bring novelty to them. At the same time, 'ruptures' (such as rapid societal changes) can lead to new formations, reconstructions and changes in gender representations.

### **What challenges and paradoxes are created for gender representations by the emerging information society?**

Gender differences in internet use support the viability of traditional gender stereotypes, through patterns of internet use that support the traditional gendered work-life divide in Estonian families (**Study II**), and gender preferences in terms of young people's activities on the internet and their experiences and coping mechanisms with online risks (**Study III**). However, the transformations create multiple challenges and paradoxes, especially in the context of gender and its interactions with other characteristics (**Study II**). As economic success and digital skills became high-level standards in Estonia, they also influenced social status, where young, employed ethnic Estonians with higher education and income perceived their social status as notably higher. Adding gender to this picture, the pattern is much more complex, as is seen in **ambivalent gender inequalities** regarding women's higher educational level, but lower position in the labour market and discrepancies in domestic responsibilities, all of which are affected by men's poor health, high levels of risk-taking activities and lower life expectancy than women. Therefore, defining who are the winners and losers of transformations regarding gender is not easy. Regarding young people and children, who are often considered to be confident and competent users of new technologies and, as a new generation, transformers of traditional beliefs, the picture is still quite unclear (**Study III**). Considering internet usage, as well as experiencing risks and coping with risky experiences, **no clear-cut gender**

**differences were found.** Firstly, although boys and girls do many different things on the internet, there are also more opportunities for shared experiences than probably ever before in children's lives. Secondly, considering the prevalence of negative experiences, especially encounters with sexual content, girls report more of these, but also know better how to cope with these experiences: girls are more communicative, talking with parents and teachers, while boys have more contacts with sexual content, but prefer not to take any action and hope that problems go away. The development of new technologies often feeds the hype without turning attention to the questions of social shaping and social consequences of the rapid technological changes. From a gender perspective, this often means the reproduction of old gender beliefs, for example privileging men's and boys' approach to technology and forgetting the importance of social coping strategies for dealing with risks.

### **How do intersections between gender and other factors influence the gender system?**

Transformations in society and the gender system include intersections between gender and other factors. In placing gender in the context of other demographic characteristics, we can see that, similarly to technological changes and social stratification, **gender itself is not a sole positioner** in the context of transformations. Adaptation to transformations, including the adoption of its most rapidly changing elements, such as the internet, is dependent on different factors. The transformations in society, instead of being a uniform set of changes, mean that different members of society have taken different pathways. However, different aspects of **transformations reveal the emergence of more advantaged social groups** with different social characteristics (younger generations, well-educated and well-off people with higher social status and, to some extent, the ethnic majority), who have maintained their lead position in the adaptation to social changes. Gender is intertwined as an important factor in all of these social characteristics.

### **III Gender representations from the perspective of children's internet use, parenting practices and socialisation patterns. Gender socialisation and the prospects for change in gender representations (Study III and Study IV)**

#### **How do changing socialisation patterns and children-parent relationships transform gender representations and do these patterns support or hinder change?**

The key domains in which social representations structure social reality are related to socialisation, which may recreate and reproduce the representations, but also induce social change. The question is whether the transformations in society change the socialisation patterns and whether this process changes the reproduction of social representations. This is very important in the case of gender representations, in which socialisation is focused on learning social

expectations and attitudes associated with one's sex as a strongly essentialised category, which makes changes in it very difficult. The results of my thesis on social mediation of children's internet use (**Study III and Study IV**) show that **mediation as a form of socialisation does not depend solely on the child's gender**, but is mixed with other socio-demographic factors, such as age and parent-child interactions. Although girls receive more parental attention and boys are more often expected to be 'natural-born experts' in technology-related matters, in both cases social mediation depends on the child's age and parental self-confidence regarding technologies. Still, parental mediation and the child's age interact differently in the case of boys and girls. Parents who tend to feel that they are less competent in internet and technology related matters are quite passive in social mediation practices. The gap between parents' self-competence and child-rearing practices is clearly reflected in gender socialisation, supporting boys' greater independence on the internet and in technology-related domains, and monitoring girls' activities, especially in the case of internet risks and other safety-related issues. Such socialisation practices support the reproduction of gender representations, but include **uncertainty and paradoxical as well as unbalanced parental practices (Study IV)**.

### **How do social subjects cope with the unpredictability and uncertainty of transformations?**

When looking at socialisation through the lens of internet-related mediation practices, parents tend to experience confusion and uneasiness in raising children in the technology-saturated world. There has always been a rift between any two generations regarding ideas about life. The sentence 'You can't understand this' has probably been spoken by every new generation to the previous. Still, nowadays it seems that the **generation gap is expanding**. One of the reasons may lie in the technology-related hype that seems to force parents to feel less competent regarding the internet and technology compared with their children, which makes them quite passive in internet mediation practices. Moreover, the busy lives of parents and children leave less and less time for mutual communication, creating gaps and disparities in child-parent relationships. Another reason why parents feel unconfident in child-raising is their struggle between the old and new, namely between authoritarian and liberal parenting paradigms, which is also visible in the context of gendered parenting. Boys tend to be raised in an authoritarian style, while parents still feel uncertainty in this, especially in technology-related and privacy issues. Girls, on the contrary, are raised according to a quite liberal approach, but with the feeling that internet-related security issues need more attention and strictness. Thus, the mediation of children's internet use as a socialisation practice is related to parents' uncertainty about technology and unbalanced parenting styles in terms of children's gender. This produces **ambivalent messages regarding the reproduction of gender representations**. It supports socialisation into traditional gender roles but it partly creates a reversed gender culture through converting parenting habits traditionally used with boys to use with girls, and *vice versa*.

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## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

### Sooliste representatsioonide dünaamika Eesti ühiskonna muutuste kontekstis

Eesti taasiseseisvumisaeg on kantud edukate majandusreformide ning eduka e-riigi kuvandist. Kiirete muutustega kohanemine pole aga kõigi ühiskonna-gruppide jaoks olnud ühtviisi kerge, mis omakorda on loonud ühiskonnas ebavõrdsust ning nõrgestanud ühiskonna sidusust. Varakapitalistliku ühiskonna materiaalsete hüvede ja edukusega seotud väärtuste domineerimine ei toetanud postmateriaalsete väärtuste esiletõusu, mis puudutas ka näiteks soolise võrdõiguslikkusega seotud väärtusi. Et domineeriv väärtussüsteem keskendus ennekõike majanduslikule edule, sh karjäärile ja majanduslikule heaolule ehk töösfääriga seotud teguritele, mida traditsiooniliselt peetakse maskuliinsete normide kandjaks, ei soodustanud see sooliselt tasakaalustatuma ühiskonna arengut. Siiski on keeruline öelda, kes on taolises soosüsteemis nn võitjad või kaotajad, sest soolise ebavõrdsuse ilmingud ühiskonnas on keerulised ja tihti vastuolulised. Et mõista laiemalt soolise ebavõrdsuse tagamaid, on tarvis analüüsida sooga seotud hoiakuid ja arusaamu ning nende muutumist ajas. Minu **doktoritöö eesmärgiks on uurida sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikat Eesti ühiskonnas sotsiaalsete muutuste taustal**. Representatsioone vaatlen siinses kontekstis kui raamistikku, mis loob piirid soolisusega seotud tähenduste loomiseks kommunikatiivsete ja diskursiivsete praktikate kaudu. Doktoritöö uuenduslikuks aspektiks on suhteliselt püsiva ja jäigalt fikseerunud soosüsteemi dünaamika jälgimine ühiskonnas, kus sotsiaalsed muutused on olnud kiired, mitmetasandilised ja kohati ka vastuolulised. Sotsiaalsete representatsioonide dünaamika jälgimine võimaldab analüüsida sotsiaalseid muutusi ning vaadelda, millisel viisil ja missuguste tegurite mõjutusel rikastuvad representatsioonid „uuendustega“ (*novelty*) (Wagner 1998), mis omakorda kujundavad muutusi ühiskonnas.

Doktoritöö põhineb ülevaateartiklil ning neljal uurimisel, mis on avaldatud rahvusvahelistes eelretsenseeritavates ajakirjades ning kogumikes. Uurimused vaatlevad minu doktoritöös soolisi representatsioone ja nende dünaamikat erinevate valdkondade näitel, uurides lähemalt positsioneerimise, sotsiaalse staatuse ning ühiskondlike muutuste mõju ja seoseid sooliste representatsioonidega. Uurimuste läbiviimisel on kasutatud erinevaid kvantitatiivseid ja kvalitatiivseid meetodeid, et mõista soolisusega seotud arenguid Eesti ambivalentsete ja mitmekihiliste ühiskondlike muutuste kontekstis ning tulenevalt töö eesmärgist analüüsida sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikat mikro- ja makrotasandi perspektiivist. See võimaldab analüüsida sooga seotud normide avaldumist sotsiaalsete muutuste kontekstis, kus indiviidide hoiakute avaldumine kommunikatiivsete praktikate kaudu kujundab sotsiaalseid representatsioone ja muutusi nendes. Sellest tulenevalt on väitekirja empiiriliseks aluseks lisaks kvantitatiivsetele andmestikele (projekti EU Kids Online üle-euroopaline uuring, esindusliku valimiga Eesti elanikkonna küsitlus „Mina. Maailm. Meedia“) ka

intervjuudel ja fookusgruupiintervjuudel põhinevad materjalid (BASNET-projekti raames läbiviidud intervjuud naisteadlastega ja fookusgruupiintervjuud Eesti lapsevanematega).

Väitekiri keskendub järgnevatele uurimisülesannetele ning otsib vastuseid neist tulenevatele uurimisküsimustele:

I. Soolised representatsioonid naisteadlaste perspektiivis. Analüüsida sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikat läbi diskursiivse enesepositsioneerimise protsessi.

Kuidas positsioneeritakse end sooga seotud diskursustes? Kas ja kuidas positsioneerimine toetab ja taastoodab soolisi representatsioone? Kuidas soolisuus kujundab inimeste sotsiaalset staatust ja identiteeti? Missugusel viisil sooliste representatsioonide taastootmine loob ja hoiab alal soolist ebavõrdsust?

II. Soolised representatsioonid sotsiaalse staatuse ja ühiskondlike muutuste perspektiivis. Analüüsida sooliste representatsioonide dünaamika paradokse ühiskondlike muutuste taustal:

Mil viisil ühiskondlikud muutused kujundavad soolisi representatsioone? Missugune on Eesti eripära, kuidas kujunev ja muutuv infoühiskond ning sellega seotud muutused ühiskonnas kujundavad soosüsteemi? Mil viisil on soolisuus läbipõimunud ning mõjutatud teistest kategooriatest?

III. Soolised representatsioonid laste ja noorte internetikasutuse, vanemate kasvatuspraktikate ja sotsialiseerimise perspektiivis. Analüüsida sotsialiseerimispraktikate muutumise mõju sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikale.

Kuivõrd infoühiskonnas toimuvad muutused sotsialiseerimispraktikates ja vanemate-lastete vahelistes suhetes avaldavad mõju sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikale? Mil viisil tulevad inimesed toime ebakindluse ja ettearvamatuslega, mis ühiskondlike muutustega kaasnevad?

Väitekirja teoreetiline peatükk loob raamistiku sotsiaalsete representatsioonide teooria osas, pöörates lähemat tähelepanu nimetatud teooria osaks olevale sotsiodünaamilisele paradigmale (nt Doise 2002, 2005; Staerkle ja Clemence 2004; Spini 2005), mis loob seose sotsiaalsete representatsioonide ja ühiskondlike muutuste vahel. Selle paradigma järgi on sotsiaalsed representatsioonid kiirete ühiskondlike muutuste ajal surve all, mis toob neisse erinevaid vaatenurki ning annab võimaluse erinevate diskursiivsete positsioonide loomiseks. See sobitub hästi sooliste representatsioonide konteksti, mis on ühelt poolt jäigalt fikseerunud kollektiivne teadmine soorollidest ja soostereotüüpidest ühiskonnas, mida taastoodetakse sotsialiseerimise kaudu, samas võimaldab see näha erinevaid vaatenurki, mis sõltuvad ühiskondlikest muutustest, kuid määratlevad siiski piirid, mille sees soolisi identiteete konstrueeritakse.

Rääkides muutustest ühiskonnas on Eesti eripäraks ennekõike muutuste mitmekihilisus ja kohati paradoksaalsus. Ühest küljest on tegemist olnud nn siirdeühiskonna protsessidega, mis kaasnesid ühest riigikorrast teise ülemineku, kuid teisalt ka muutustega, mis seonduvad globaliseerumise ja kiire

tehnoloogilise ning ühiskondliku arenguga maailmas laiemalt. Seega, laias laastus saab rääkida kahesugusest protsessist – püüd jõuda lähemale lääne ühiskonnaga võrreldavale elustandardile (*catching up*) ja teisalt, kuna kiired muutused toimuvad ka mujal, siis on paratamatu pidev mahajäämus (*falling behind*) (Norkus 2015). Seesugune mitmete muutuste üheaegne ja paralleelne toimimine tekitab ühiskonnas teatava kiirendusefekti, kus ühiskonna liikmetelt oodatakse kiiret valmisolekut muutustega kohaneda. See omakorda tekitab ühiskonnas hulgaliselt pingeid ja ebasünkroonsusi (Rosa 2013), kus inimesed tajuvad edu, aga ka läbikukkumist väga tugevalt isiklikust perspektiivist lähtudes.

Kiired ja vastuolulised muutused kujundavad ka väärtuspilti, kus majanduslik edukus ja tehnoloogiline areng on jätnud varju ebavõrdsuse, vaesuse ja sotsiaalse sidususega seotud probleemid. See on muu hulgas mõjutanud ka soolise võrdõiguslikkuse ja sooga seotud hoiakute kujunemist, kus soorollide ühekülgsus ja soolise ebavõrdsuse kujunemise ja taastootmise mehhanismid ei ole lasknud tekkida sooliselt tasakaalustataval ühiskonnal. Oma osa on siin ka nõukogude aja pärandil, kus tegelik sooline ebavõrdsus oli peidetud soolise võrdõiguslikkuse retoorika maski taha, mis omakorda tekitas inimestes vastuseisu soolise võrdõiguslikkusega seotud temaatika osas, mida nähti kui võõrast, ohtlikku ja ebavajalikku sissetungijat läänest (Marling 2010). Seega võib sooliste representatsioonide dünaamika uurimine anda teadmisi laiematest ühiskonna muutustega seotud protsessidest.

Järgnevalt on esitatud doktoritöö peamised tulemused ja järeldused seatud uurimisülesannete lõikes.

## **I. Sooliste representatsioonide dünaamika diskursiivses enesepositioneerimise protsessis**

Sooga seotud tähenduste konstrueerimine on varjatud ja diskursiivne, kuid nende nähtavaks tegemine toob esile soolise ebavõrdsuse tekkemehhanisme, mis ilmnevad eriti tugevalt patriarhaalseid väärtusi kandvates kultuurides. See ilmneb näiteks **I uurimuses** käsitletud naisteadlaste enesepositioneerimise strateegiatel, mis kannavad ennekõike olemasoleva soosüsteemi põlistamise ja sooga seotud traditsiooniliste normidega sobitumise funktsiooni. Püüd sobitada end patriarhaalseid väärtusi kandvasse soosüsteemi ilma seda kahtluse alla seadmata on omamoodi **toimetulekumehhanism**, mille kaudu välditakse nn piiridest väljaastumist. Sellega luuakse **identiteete, mis toetavad ja hoiavad alal traditsioonilisi soostereotüüpe**, kus naiselikuks peetav käitumine eeldab kohanemist ja sulandumist olemasolevasse (organisatsiooni)kultuuri, mitte sellele vastu astumist või selle kahtluse alla seadmist. Kuna ühiskonnas domineerivad väärtused ning töökultuur eeldavad edule ja tööle ehk teisisõnu maskuliinsetele väärtustele orienteeritust, siis kajastub see ka sooliste identiteetide konstrueerimises, kus naised püüavad **vältida nn naiseliku sooidentiteedi esiletoomist**, mis seondub ennekõike pere, laste ning töö- ja pereelu ühitamist puudutavate teemadega tööelu ning karjääri mõjutajatena. Tulemustes kajastub selgelt naiste enese mitmel viisil nähtamatuks tegemise ja sobitumise püüet, mis peegeldab hästi sooliste hierarhiate ja stereotüüpide jõulisust organisatsioonis. Jäigad

soostereotüübid loovad **topeltstandardeid**, kus osades ühiskondlikes sfäärides ning tegevustes peetakse sobivamaks naisi ja osades mehi, mis omakorda loob hulgaliselt barjääre edukaks toimetulekuks ning suurendab soolist ebavõrdsust. See kajastub muu hulgas ka naiste püüdes ja sellega seotud teatavas pinges end pidevalt tõestada, arvates, et nad pole oma ametipositsioonil piisavalt head. Eeltoodud mikrotasandi analüüs, kus on vaadatud enesepositsioneerimise strateegiaid sooga seotud diskursustes toob esile soolise ebavõrdsuse, võimu ning domineerimise allikad ning näitab selgelt **sooliste representatsioonide tugevat põlistatust ühiskonnas**, mis avaldub eriti selgelt tugevate maskuliinsete väärtustega ja konkurentsile orienteeritud (organisatsiooni)kultuuris.

## **II. Sooliste representatsioonide dünaamika paradoksid ühiskondlike muutuste taustal**

Et analüüsida lähemalt sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikat seoses muutustega ühiskonnas, on **II** ja **III uurimuses** pööratud tähelepanu tehnoloogilistele muutustele ja selle mõjudele inimeste staatuse ja identiteedi kujunemisel sooliste representatsioonide perspektiivist lähtuvalt. **II uurimus** vaatleb **sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikaga seotud paradokse** ning toob välja, et muutused Eesti ühiskonnas on kujundanud inimeste staatust ning identiteeti ja mõjutanud nende igapäevapraktikaid, kuid rääkides soolistest representatsioonidest ei saa nendega seoses välja tuua selgepiirilisi muutusi. **Soolised hierarhiad, läbipõimituna vanuse, rahvuse ja sotsiaalse staatusega**, moodustavad sotsiaalsete hierarhiate perspektiivist keerukaid ja mitmetahulisi struktuure. Ühiskonna orienteeritus majanduslikule edule ja kiirele kohanemisele tehnoloogiliste muutustega tõid kaasa selle, et osa ühiskonnagruppe tajusid oma sotsiaalset staatust kõrgemana kui teised. Näiteks võib öelda, et nn võitjate rühma moodustasid noored eestlased, kel oli kõrgem haridus ja kõrgem sissetulek ning kes suutsid muutustega kõige kiiremini ja edukamalt kohaneda. Kui lisada siia sugu, siis muutub pilt hoopis keerulisemaks ning selgelt võitjatest ja kaotajatest rääkida ei saa. Muutused ühiskonnas on loonud **soolist ebavõrdsust erineval ning isegi kohati vastuolulisel moel**. Näiteks on naiste haridustase tervikuna kõrgem, kuid sooline segregatsioon ja sooline palgalõhe peegeldavad endiselt nende madalamat positsiooni tööturul. Samas näiteks domineerivate väärtushinnangute järgi võiks mehi pidada nn võitjateks, kuid nende tervise ja riskikäitumisega seotud tegurid ning naistega võrreldes madalam eluiga ei võimalda seda siiski arvata. Seetõttu tulebki vaadelda soolise ebavõrdsuse ja sooliste representatsioonidega seotud arenguid komplekssemalt ning lisaks soole kaasata vaatluse alla ka teised sotsiaal-demograafilised ning sotsiaalmajanduslikud tegurid.

Et muutuste kandjaks peetakse sageli just nooremaid põlvkondi, võtab **III uurimus** vaatluse alla soolised muustrid laste ja noorte põlvkonna puhul läbi internetikasutamise praktikate ning sellega seotud riskide ning nendega toimetuleku mehhanismide. Laste ja noorte internetikasutuse ning võimalike sooliste erinevustega selles on seotud terve rida müüte. Esiteks on kiired tehnoloogilised arengud kaasa toonud arvamuse, et tehnoloogiatel endal on ühiskondlike

muutuste esilekutsujana pearoll. Selline tehnoloogiline põhistatus kajastub ka sooliste stereotüüpide kujundamises. Nii näiteks peetakse poisse tehnoloogiatega kasutamisel võimekamateks ning seetõttu pööravad nt lapsevanemad märksa vähem tähelepanu nende negatiivsetele kogemustele internetis, võrreldes tüdrukutega, kellega just internetiohtude teadvustamise ja internetiturvalisuse osas palju tegeletakse. Tulemused aga näitavad, et esiteks **ei saa üldse rääkida väga olulistest soolistest erinevustest interneti kasutamise praktikates**, internetis on ka palju jagatud tegevusi, kus osalevad nii poisid kui tüdrukud. Teiseks, internetis on riskide kogemine ja sellega toimetulek mõjutatud lapse soost, kus näiteks seksuaalse sisuga seotud kogemuste puhul kogevad tüdrukud seda küll vähem, kuid pöörduvad abi otsimiseks sagedamini täiskasvanute poole (näiteks räägivad kellelegi endaga juhtunust), samas kui poisid puutuvad seksuaalse sisuga kokku rohkem, kuid ei võta midagi ette ning loodavad, et probleem laheneb iseenesest. Seega on **soolised erinevused ning käitumismustrid ka siin suhteliselt vastuolulised** ja ühel või teisel viisil soolisi representatsioone taastootvad. Millistest muutustest soolistes representatsioonides saab aga rääkida kiirete ja tehnoloogiatega küllastunud ühiskondlike arengute kontekstis? Siinkohal tuleb mõelda, et keeruline on öelda, **mis mida mõjutab ja muudab**. Ühelt poolt võivad suhteliselt jäigad ning normatiivsed soolised representatsioonid püsida hoolimata muutustest ja arengutest ühiskonnas, teisalt aga võivad ühiskondlikud muutused toimida kui „raputused“, mis mõjutavad uute perspektiivide ja arengute ellu kutsumist, muutes seeläbi ka sooga seotud hoiakuid ning stereotüüpe.

### **III. Sotsialiseerimispraktikate muutumise mõju sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikale**

Sotsialiseerimine on üheks peamiseks viisiks sotsiaalsete representatsioonide taastootmisel ning muutused sotsialiseerimispraktikates võimaldavad laiendada ning muuta piire representatsioonide ja ühiskondlike muutuste kontekstist lähtuvalt. **III ja IV uurimus** analüüsivad, kas muutuvad sotsialiseerimispraktikad, nagu internetikasutuse sotsiaalne vahendamine ning muutuvad laste ja vanemate vahelised suhted võiksid mõjutada sooliste representatsioonide muutumist Eestis. Siinjuures on eriti oluline just soolise sotsialiseerimise analüüsimine, mis on fokuseeritud sooga seotud sotsiaalsete ootuste ja hoiakute omandamisele, mis kipuvad olema jäigalt fikseeritud ning raskelt muudetavad. Ühest küljest näitavad tulemused, et vahendamispraktikate puhul saab rääkida suhteliselt stereotüüpsetest mustritest, kus hirmust internetiga seotud ohtude ees pööratakse rohkem tähelepanu tüdrukutele, eelkõige nendega internetiohtudest rääkimisele, samas kui poisid juba eelmainitud stereotüüpide tõttu tehnoloogilise võimekusega seonduvalt saavad tunduvalt vähem tähelepanu ja siis ka ennekõike jälgivate ja keelavate vahendamispraktikate näol. Teisalt aga näitab laste internetikasutuse vanemliku vahendamise uurimine, et **sotsialiseerimine ja vahendamispraktikad ei sõltu üksnes lapse soost**, vaid on tugevalt seotud ka lapse vanusega, lapse ja vanema vahelise suhte kvaliteedi ning vanema enda enesekindlusega interneti ja tehnoloogiatega kasutamisel. Nii näiteks mõjutab

lapse vanus vanemate kasvatuspraktikaid poiste ja tüdrukute puhul erineval moel, kus nooremate poiste puhul kasutatakse tüdrukutega võrreldes rohkem keelavaid strateegiaid ning vanemate poiste puhul, vastupidi, vähem, kuna tüdrukute puhul tõusevad siis vanemate jaoks rohkem päevakorda internetiohtude ning -turvalisusega seotud küsimused. Lisaks tuleb märkida, et **vanemad tunnevad end laste internetikasutuse vahendamisel üpris ebakindlalt** ühelt poolt nii selle tõttu, et nad pole kindlad enese võimekuses interneti ja tehnoloogiatega toimetulekuks, kuid teisalt ollakse ebakindlad ka kasvatusstiilide valikul üldiselt, kus autoritaarsete ja liberaalsete kasvatusviiside vahel otsustamine on mõjutatud ennekõike just laste soost. Selle kõige tulemusena saab kokkuvõtlikult rääkida kahest suundumusest. Esiteks saab tehnoloogiate kiire arenguga seoses rääkida vanemate ning laste puhul sellega erinevast kohanemisest ja sellest tulenevast põlvkondlikust **lõhest**, mis mõjutab ka sotsialiseerimispraktikaid ning sellega seotud muutusi. Teisalt on ühiskonna kiirenemisest ja vanemate ajaressursi vähenemisest tulenevalt **kasvatuspraktikad suhteliselt ebäühtlased ja ebajärjepidevad**, mõjutades ka sooliste representatsioonide dünaamikat.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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2017–present University of Tartu, Institute of Social Studies, researcher in Sociology  
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2007–2014 University of Tartu, Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, researcher  
2006–2008 University of Tartu, Estonian Centre of Behavioural and Health Sciences, national coordinator of European Social Survey  
2002–2006 University of Tartu, Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, project assistant  
2007–2013 NGO ETNA Estonia, project manager, member of the board

### Main research areas:

Gender studies (sociology of gender, children and internet, risk behaviour, inter-generational relationships, women in entrepreneurship, women in science), qualitative methods, mixed methods, gender equality policies in Estonia

### Scientific-administrative activities and membership in organisations:

2017–present member of ERGOMAS (European Research Group on Military and Society)  
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**Additional publication, related to the doctoral thesis:**

- Talves, K., Nunes, R. (2014). Cyberbullying – threat to children’s rights and well-being. Kutsar, D., Warming, H. (Eds.). *Children and non-discrimination: Interdisciplinary textbook*, Children’s Rights Erasmus Academic Network (CREAN). Tartu: University Press of Estonia, 221–235.
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- Talves, K., Laas, A. (2008). Väljapaistvad naised teaduses: naisteadlaste karjääriteed ‘eduka teadlase’ diskursuse taustal. [Prominent Women in Science: Career Paths of Women Scientists and the Discourse of ‘Successful Scientist’], *Ariadne Lõng: nais- ja meesuuringute ajakiri [Ariadne’s Clew: Estonian Journal of Gender Studies]*, 8 (1/2), 19–33.

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2014–praeguseni Kaitseväge Ühendatud Õppeasutused, teadustöö korralduse spetsialist  
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2006–2008 Tartu Ülikool, Eesti käitumis- ja terviseteaduste keskus, Euroopa Sotsiaaluuringu Eesti koordinaator  
2002–2006 Tartu Ülikool, sotsiaal- ja haridusteaduskond, projekti assistent  
2007–2013 MTÜ ETNA Eestimaal, projektijuht, juhatuse esimees

### Peamised uurimisvaldkonnad:

Soouuringud (soosotsioloogia, lapsed, noored ja internet, riskikäitumine, põlvkondadevahelised suhted, naised ettevõtluses, naised teaduses), kvalitatiivsed meetodid, kombineeritud meetodid, võrdõiguslikkuse edendamise poliitika Eestis

### Teadusorganisatsiooniline ja -administratiivne tegevus:

2017–praeguseni ERGOMAS (European Research Group on Military and Society) liige  
2014–praeguseni ISA (International Sociological Association) pereuuringute võrgustiku liige

**Doktoritöö teemaga seotud täiendavad publikatsioonid:**

- Talves, K., Nunes, R. (2014). Cyberbullying – threat to children’s rights and well-being. Kutsar, D., Warming, H. (toim.). *Children and non-discrimination: Interdisciplinary textbook*, Children’s Rights Erasmus Academic Network (CREAN). Tartu: University Press of Estonia, 221–235.
- Talves, K. (2011). Soosotsioloogia. Marling, R. (toim.) *Sissejuhatus soouuringutesse*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.
- Talves, K, Laas, A. (2008). Väljapaistvad naised teaduses: naisteadlaste karjääriteed „eduka teadlase“ diskursuse taustal, *Ariadne Lõng: nais- ja meesuuringute ajakiri*, 8 (1/2), 19–33.

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