

MARIT NAPP

The communicative construction
of families: emerging trends
in the age of deep mediatisation



DISSERTATIONES DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This dissertation is based on the following four original publications referred to by Roman numerals:

- I. **Sukk, M., & Siibak, A.** (2021). Caring dataveillance and the construction of “good parenting”: Estonian parents’ and pre-teens’ reflections on the use of tracking technologies. *Communications*, 46(3), 446–467.
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- III. **Napp, M., & Siibak, A.** (2023). Rationalising the use of child-tracking technologies by Estonian parents: applying the ethics of care framework. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- IV. Kalmus, V., **Sukk, M., & Soo, K.** (2022). Towards more active parenting: Trends in parental mediation of children’s internet use in European countries. *Children & Society*, 36(5), 1026–1042.
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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Study I

“Caring dataveillance and the construction of “good parenting”: Estonian parents’ and pre-teens’ reflections on the use of tracking technologies”: the author was predominantly responsible for collecting the data, solely responsible for the Q methodological analysis, and predominantly responsible for the other parts of the manuscript.

Study II

““My mom just wants to know where I am’: Estonian pre-teens’ perspectives on intimate surveillance by parents”: The author was predominantly responsible for collecting the data, solely responsible for the Q methodological analysis, and predominantly responsible for the other parts of the manuscript.

Study III

“Rationalising the use of child-tracking technologies by Estonian parents: applying the ethics of care framework”: the author was predominantly responsible for collecting the data, solely responsible for the analysis, and predominantly responsible for the other parts of the manuscript.

Study IV

“Towards more active parenting: Trends in parental mediation of children’s internet use in European countries”: the author was predominantly responsible for the introduction and theoretical part of the manuscript and partially involved in the results and discussion parts.

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I have a vivid memory of a sunny June afternoon from a few years ago. I was strolling down Tartu's Lossi hill alongside Professor **Andra Siibak**, right after successfully defending my master's thesis. Out of the blue, she asked me if I had considered applying for doctoral studies. Since I was a little girl, I had dreamt of obtaining a PhD (or, to be precise, becoming a professor), but I had never dared to voice it aloud. That conversation in 2018 marked the beginning of my journey.

While this thesis signifies an endpoint in some respects, it also marks a new beginning. One realisation I've had during my studies is that my dissertation isn't a final destination but rather a gateway to unexplored paths. The road thus far has been lengthy and often arduous, yet remarkably fulfilling. Now, I allow myself to take pride in my achievements and where I have ended up.

However, reaching this point would not have been possible without the people who surrounded me. My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisors, Professors Andra Siibak and **Veronika Kalmus**. I have been incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with both of them – they have served as fierce role models to a young scientist. They have nurtured and supported me, offering cherished opportunities. Most importantly, they have motivated me, and pushed me to strive for better.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, families are increasingly surrounded by various forms of the media: from digital platforms to the accompanying algorithms, these media platforms are transforming the everyday practices and experiences of children and their parents. As families' lives become more digital, "socialization, learning, development, self-expression, and social interaction are shaped by the very technological infrastructures and communication practices that support them" (Mascheroni & Siibak, 2021, p. 2). Families and the media are changing in relation to each other, which can be described with the notion of mediatisation – a meta-process (Krotz, 2007) whereby media increasingly "become relevant for the social construction of everyday life" (Krotz, 2009, p. 24). This ongoing transformation of our daily lives, culture, and society must be understood in the context of the continuing transformation of media itself, which "organises all symbolic operations of a society and culture in that digital computer-controlled infrastructure" (Krotz, 2017, p. 105). Furthermore, at the same time and much more far-reaching, all media are increasingly built on software, which means that "algorithms become part of our media-related sense-making" (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018, p. 16).

Therefore, I view the media in this thesis as broadly all technological devices and environments mediating communication (Köuts-Klemm & Seppel, 2018). Today's media are more than just means of communication – they also serve as tools for real-time data collection about the people who use them (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). This data collection poses an issue for the privacy and rights of children and parents, as their media consumption is subject to widespread commercial surveillance that frequently occurs without their awareness (Mascheroni, 2018). Furthermore, these data are used as a source for various forms of automated processing, which has become an essential part of the construction of our social world (Hepp, 2020). This recent wave of digitalisation and datafication has brought us to a new era of *deep mediatisation*, a process of "far-reaching entanglement of media technologies with the everyday practices of our social world" (Hepp, 2016, p. 918).

Deep mediatisation is not a process that just *happens*. While this process involves a variety of technologies and infrastructures, it remains one made by humans who give it meaning (Hepp, 2020). Therefore, deep mediatisation allows an actor's point of view (Hepp, 2020); for example, it allows an understanding of how mediatisation takes place where various actors come together – in the context of this thesis, in families. Deep mediatisation is characterised by the extent to which the practices of these different actors (e.g., family members) are entangled with digital media and their infrastructures (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014). For example, increasing numbers of media devices in various places, different new services and the continuous and omnipresent availability of those services that overcome temporal and spatial boundaries mark a noteworthy trend in media use (Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2019.). Therefore, most families in industrial societies "are mediatised today because communication and internal structure fundamentally

depend on media” (Krotz, 2017, p. 106). Media are reshaping how parents and children live, work, play and communicate (Livingstone et al., 2011a).

Communication is at the very heart of this thesis. It involves much more than just transmitting messages; it is essential to how all social realities, including families, are formed and structured (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2006; Hepp, 2022). Consequently, I view communication as constitutive of families – communication is the central process that co-creates, sustains, and changes families (Baxter, 2014; Braithwaite et al., 2018). I recognise that it may be challenging to think about family as created in communication rather than a taken-for-granted reality because family is a pervasive and institutionalised social form (Braithwaite et al., 2018). However, as Hepp (2022) argues, we create the meaning of our social world through multiple communication processes. Therefore, in the context of this thesis, I conclude that the family as part of our social world becomes meaningful through communicative practices; that is, highly complex and contextualised patterns of doing that are fundamental to the human construction of reality (Hepp, 2022). In this dissertation, I focus on families consisting of parent(s) and child(ren) and their perspectives, while many other family structures indeed exist.

My thesis aims to explore how the communicative construction of families transforms with the changes in today’s media; that is, through deep mediatisation and the consequences of this transformation. Mediatisation research asks more generally how vital the media are as means of communication and as an influence on the social construction of reality (Hepp, 2020). I aim to look closely at families, thus bridging the theory with empirical perspectives. I thereby move towards what has been increasingly demanded of mediatisation research, namely a closer and contextual examination of the lived experiences of people (Hepp, 2020; Livingstone, 2019). My empirical research is based on tracking technologies in families and parental mediation, which constitute a part of the lived experience of families in a media-saturated world.

Furthermore, by investigating the family as a communicative figuration, I adopt an open, analytical approach that allows me to research the transformation of the family within deep mediatisation. I argue that families, like many other figurations, are increasingly made-up by technology, which is one possible driving force of their transformation, and raises questions about privacy in the age of deep mediatisation. My **research questions** are as follows:

1. How does technology transform the communicative construction of families in times of deep mediatisation?
2. What are the consequences of deep mediatisation for the family as a communicative figuration?
3. How do family members manage their privacy related to digital technologies?

My work is rooted in the social constructivist paradigm. Adopting a social constructivist lens “may help facilitate a critical turn to understand how members interact and co-create family in increasingly digital ways” (Braithwaite et al.,

2018, p. 276), and highlight marginalised voices (e.g., children's). Furthermore, I also approach mediatisation from a social constructivist perspective (i.e., people construct the world differently when using new media) as opposed to an institutional perspective (media institutions gain more and more power through mediatisation developments, thus changing the architecture of political, economic, or societal institutions and respective communication) (Hepp, 2013). The social constructivist perspective emphasises the role of the media in the communicative construction of the social world, with a primary focus on examining mediatisation through the lens of everyday experiences (Knoblauch, 2013).

I view mediatisation as a *sensitising concept* (Jensen, 2013), which “gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances” and that “merely suggests directions along which to look” (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). This means looking at the overall spread of different media and the related changes in various social domains (Schulz, 2014), for example, in families. Mediatisation *sensitises* us to fundamental transformations we experience in today's media environment (Hepp, 2020).

This thesis is based on four empirical articles focused on children's and parents' perspectives that help me to answer my research questions. Three of the articles are co-authored with Professor Andra Siibak and one with Professor Veronika Kalmus and Kadri Soo. The first study in my list of publications explored how the use of tracking devices is rationalised within families and what are the dominant parenting values associated with such practice (**STUDY I**, “Caring dataveillance and the construction of “good parenting”: Estonian parents' and pre-teens' reflections on the use of tracking technologies”). This was followed by a study that took a closer look at pre-teens' viewpoints and experiences related to their parents' usage of child-tracking technologies (**STUDY II**, “My mom just wants to know where I am”: Estonian pre-teens' perspectives on intimate surveillance by parents”). My third publication (**STUDY III**, “Rationalising the use of child-tracking technologies by Estonian parents: applying the ethics of care framework”) utilises the same data as in **STUDIES I** and **II**, focusing on parents' experiences with tracking devices and how these technologies relate to parents' caring work. The data for **STUDIES I**, **II** and **III** were collected using a participatory approach – the Q methodology. My fourth empirical study (**STUDY IV**, “Towards more active parenting: Trends in parental mediation of children's internet use in European countries”) provides a different perspective by making use of the extensive Europe-wide EU Kids Online survey data and exploring trends in parental mediation that have unravelled over eight years in European countries.

This thesis is structured as follows: First, I give an overview of relevant theoretical concepts. Then I describe the methodological approach and discuss some ethical considerations. After that, I will present the main results of my studies and, in the next chapter, discuss the main findings. My thesis ends with a conclusion and an Estonian summary.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Families as communicative figurations

One of the most fundamental theoretical conceptualisations within mediatisation research emphasises its domain specificity – mediatisation is not a homogenous process but takes place very differently in different spheres of society (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). It is advantageous to view families as communicative figurations to capture the increasing spread of technologically based media in families and how these media are increasingly shaping families (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). A figurational approach considers the individual and society fundamentally entangled with each other rather than as separate entities (Elias, 1978). Figurations can be viewed as webs of interdependencies (Elias, 1978) – each individual lives at the centre of the different figurations she or he is connected with. Following this perspective, traditional institutions of family and school, for example, are “no longer positioned *around* individuals but are constituted *as* figurations of individuals” (Hepp, 2022, p. 60, emphasis in original). According to Elias (1978), figurations are inherent in our lives from birth – we are entangled in various figurations, such as family and circles of friends, and we cannot develop as individuals without being part of these figurations. This figurational approach is similar to some other approaches in the social sciences. For instance, Erving Goffman (1978) asserts that personal identity and the self are constantly being constructed in response to situational contexts and are, therefore, neither static nor coherent. Stuart Hall (1992) also emphasises the dynamic nature of identity, characterising it as an ongoing process of identification and continuous articulation.

A figurational approach “moves the figurations of human actors into the foreground and simultaneously considers how far these figurations are entangled with media as contents and technologies” (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018, p. 16). From such a perspective, there are mainly three characteristics of a communicative figuration that help to analyse our life’s complexity with media (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). First, all figurations comprise a *constellation of actors*; for example, family members (parents, children, grandparents) who are interrelated and communicate amongst themselves (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017). Second, each communicative figuration has certain *frames of relevance* that define the *topic*, and therefore the character of a communicative figuration. The relevance-frames of a figuration express its social meaning as a distinct way of acting together (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). For example, the relevance-frames of a family encompass, among others, parents’ values related to child rearing. Third, each figuration is based on certain *communicative practices*; that is, doing certain things together, often with and through media (i.e., communicative practices rely on and are entangled with a media ensemble (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). This means that figurations typically come together with particular objects and technologies; for example, within the media ensemble of modern-day families, the smartphone has become a vital instrument for coordinating everyday family life and the surveillance of children

(Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017). By adopting a figurational approach in media and communications research, we can “connect perspectives on individuals and the social domains they are part of with their entanglement with media in a productive way” (Hepp, 2020, p. 104).

We can consider each figuration as communicative because communicative practices “are of high importance when it comes to a meaningful construction of the respective figuration” (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018, p. 29). For example, family members may be separated in space but remain connected through various modes of communication (e.g., phone calls and sharing on digital platforms), which sustain familial connections (Madianou & Miller, 2012). As this example illustrates, many figurations today are constructed through the use of media – within deep mediatisation, many communicative practices are *media practices* (Couldry, 2004); that is, undertaken in relation to media. Hepp and Hasebrink (2018) argue that this is one possible driving force of the transformation of figurations, as the figurations of individuals, collectivities (e.g., families), and organisations (e.g., schools) change with their media ensembles; that is, their media-related communicative practices (e.g., using smartphones). Transformation, at this point, refers to a more fundamental structural shift in human relationships and practices; in other words, a *re-figuration* (Hepp, 2020). Re-figuration refers to the transformation of figurations and their interrelatedness to society (Hepp, 2020). Furthermore, in times of deep mediatisation, we encounter a distinct form of transformation: *recursive transformation* (Hepp, 2020). Recursivity suggests that “rules for how something should change are inscribed into data processing algorithms which are reapplied to the social phenomena they collect data on and through these recursive loops they are themselves an influential factor in the transformation of social phenomena” (Hepp, 2020, p. 11–12).

To sum up, by approaching the family as a communicative figuration, I can research the transformation of the family within deep mediatisation. I argue that families, like many other figurations, are increasingly made-up using technology, which is one possible driving force of their transformation. However, it is important to point out that today’s figurations can also transform because of other meta-processes, such as globalisation, individualisation, and commercialisation.

2.2 The growing technologisation of the parent-child relationship and parental care

We can conclude that media can be a *constitutive element* (Hasebrink, 2014) of the communicative construction of families against the background of a changing media environment. Therefore, the construction of the family should be seen alongside the media appropriated in the family (Hepp, 2020). There is a growing number of media technologies in almost every household, meaning that digital media permeate many socialisation contexts (Mascheroni & Siibak, 2021), including child rearing. Contemporary parenting can make use of various communicative practices: from sharing the first images of an unborn child on social media

(Leaver, 2017; Siibak, 2019) to pregnancy-monitoring apps (Barassi, 2017), other-tracking devices (Gabriels, 2016) and sharenting (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017) – parents are increasingly engaging in mediated parenting practices (Mascaroni, Ponte, & Jorge, 2018).

These parental practices are connected to the trends characterising the age of deep mediation. A vast number of technologically based media is available for families (i.e., the trend for *differentiation*), intensifying *connectivity* across various media and maintaining relationships across distances (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). The spread of digital technologies is related to their *omnipresence*, creating the possibility of being “always on” (Chen, 2012) and “constantly in touch” (Agar, 2003) in many social situations (e.g., talking to family members). Recent changes in the media environment have also been accompanied by a *rapid pace of innovation*, meaning that the time sequence of fundamental media innovations has (at least in the perception of many media users) shortened considerably over the past few decades (Rosa, 2013). Finally, one of the most significant trends that characterise the current wave of mediation, and therefore communicative practices in families, is *datafication* (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). Datafication refers to the transformation of social action into online quantified data (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013) – using various media, we leave digital traces (Karanasios et al., 2013) – “data that can be aggregated and processed in automated ways on the basis of algorithms” (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018, p. 22).

The trends mentioned above have given momentum to a normative view of parenting that has grown in importance in recent decades – the idea that parenting requires intervention (Lewis, 2011). This belief can translate into various parenting practices, including overprotective (Ungar, 2009), helicopter (LeMoyné & Buchanan, 2011), and paranoid parenting (Pain, 2006). Today, more than ever, parents “can and do transcend every realm of their children’s lives” through the use of various technologies, and thereby engage in *transcendent parenting* (Lim, 2020, p. 135). This always-on parenting is often deemed desirable and sensible (Lim, 2020), whereas offline parenting can be considered irresponsible and even reckless (Leaver, 2017).

As part of this development, parenting policies in many societies portray parents as lacking in some way – “they have started to be seen through the lens of a deficit model” (Creasy & Corby, 2019, p. 60). In our present-day risk society (Ericson & Haggerty, 2006), problems relating to children are often explained in terms of the threats to children from their environment, which parents need to be aware of and protect their children from (Creasy & Corby, 2019). The previous stance refers to the welfarist protectionism paradigm, depicting childhood as a time of innocence and vulnerability when children need protection from the adult world (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992; Kalmus, 2013).

Consequently, society promotes parenting as supervision – pressuring parents in general and mothers in particular to participate in dataveillance, a form of continuous surveillance through the use of (meta)data (Raley, 2013). This means that parents feel pressured to take responsibility for finding, generating, and using digitised information about childcare (van Dijck, 2014). According to Lupton

(2016), dataveillance is typically viewed as limiting the independence and privacy of the individuals being monitored, which carries a negative connotation. Therefore, she suggests adopting the term *caring dataveillance*, which connects the concepts of dataveillance and caring practices as they are experienced in and with the use of apps and other digital technologies (e.g., baby tech products) for parenting (Lupton, 2020). In this thesis, I also use the notion of caring dataveillance, which manifests as an act of love and attentiveness in familial contexts (Lupton, 2020). In these settings, digital devices have come to symbolise the *materialities of care* (Lupton, 2020).

Care and its relationship to the family is decidedly complex in nature. Care research has often focused on the ways in which women have undertaken the bulk of caring for others (Graham, 1983), including the gendered nature of care (Morgan, 1996) or the devaluation of caring work (Abbott & Wallace, 1990). Recent studies have transcended the caring context from the health domain to broader social contexts because “empathy, care, respect, and autonomy are central features of social life” (O’Reilly et al., 2021, p. 94). In my research, I have relied on the ethics of care: care is an ongoing process which is both a disposition and a practice (Tronto, 1993). Care practices include maintaining, continuing, and repairing the (social) world to make it as good to live in as possible (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Furthermore, care is an ideology guiding normative judgement and action, and caring reflects individuals’ practices and values (Held, 2006).

Technologies facilitate and enable different modes of care in families (Zakharova & Jarke, 2022), producing a “new topology of care” (Milligan & Wiles, 2010). Families have different care arrangements “where care is not only seen from a bodywork perspective – that is, the usually invisible physical labour that caregiving entails – but from a broader perspective considering socio-material arrangements: that is, where care-work appears as distributed amongst people and things and where delegations of tasks to things are also noted” (Criado & Rodríguez-Giralt, 2016, pp. 212–213). Therefore, these things, or digital technologies, are understood to be embedded in and configure contemporary socio-material care arrangements (Criado & Rodríguez-Giralt, 2016).

Although attending to the well-being and safety of children has long been a fundamental aspect of parenting philosophies, it can be argued that the current “parental gaze has become technologised” (Howell, 2010, p. 1). Some scholars claim that spying on one’s children has become an advanced parenting tool (Marx & Steeves, 2010), as various technologies such as pregnancy apps, baby monitors, parental controls, and tracking devices have been introduced into the market in response to parental concerns. These worries reflect a state of anxiety which was first identified among middle-class parents in the early 2000s in Western countries (Nelson, 2008).

In fact, as many of today’s parents interpret, the culturally accepted level of care means keeping one’s children under close surveillance at all times to control and take care of them simultaneously (Howell, 2010). A rapid pace of innovation, embedded in deep mediatisation, might also result in a perceived adjustment pressure (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018) – a pressure to conform to changes in many

aspects of everyday life, including present-day child rearing. Therefore, on the one hand, mediatisation can be seen as an enabler or intensifier of these parenting practices, but on the other hand, one of the possible outcomes of the same practices, as myriad technological solutions have been created to ease the aforementioned parental anxieties, is enabling parents to create “virtual togetherness with their children over distance” (Gabriels, 2016, p. 176). This caring dataveillance has become a widespread practice associated with regular parental care (Lupton & Williamson, 2017), illustrating a normative discourse surrounding present-day parenting. However, we could argue that such a protective and connected stance can lead to a no-risk culture, altering and limiting children’s experiences and hindering their potential (Furedi, 2002). When creating their own surveillance imaginaries (i.e., patterns of perspectives and outlooks on surveillance; Lyon, 2017), parents may not only obstruct the development of resilience (Abbas et al., 2011) but also put children in a vulnerable, dependent position (Meyer, 2007).

Furthermore, as Livingstone and Byrne (2018) claimed, using parenting apps and the wish to protect children clash with allowing children to discover, learn, and grow independently. Diminishing trust in the parent-child relationship is also a possible repercussion of intensive parenting. As Rooney (2010, p. 347) notes, “having opportunities to trust and to be trusted is, therefore, a crucial part of a child’s learning how to be with others in a way that supports their capacity to live and to live in a meaningful way”. To sum up, while these digital connections may seem helpful for parents to become more involved in their children’s everyday life, the question arises as to whether parents can become too involved (Lim, 2020). Such trends have also raised questions about whether children may depend more on their parents for tasks they should perform independently (Lim, 2020). Hence, the social change associated with new technologies (i.e., mediatisation) has radically shaped the nature and expectations of parenting and childhood.

2.3 Communication in digital families

Children’s physical, cognitive, and social development is mainly attributable to parenting style (Warren & Aloia, 2019). We can identify four dominant parenting styles: permissive (low on demandingness and high on responsiveness), authoritative (high on demandingness and responsiveness), authoritarian (high on demandingness and low on responsiveness) and rejecting-neglecting (neither demanding nor responsive) (Baumrind, 1991). These parenting styles are based on the parents’ emphasis on demandingness, including parental control, discipline, supervision, and demands regarding the children’s maturity and responsiveness; that is, being supportive of the children’s needs and demands (Warren & Aloia, 2019). Parenting styles are closely connected to familial surveillance imaginaries – surveillant parents have different parenting styles (Marciano, 2022). It is essential to highlight that “parenting styles determine the scope and form of intrafamilial surveillance rather than its presence or lack” (Marciano, 2022, p. 46). This means that parents who engage in caring dataveillance do not necessarily represent a

particular parenting style, as using surveillance technology demonstrates how pervasive and versatile modern technologies have become.

An embodiment of parenting style is parental mediation, which comprises strategies that parents employ to control, supervise, or interpret media content for their children (Warren, 2001) to maximise their children's benefits and minimise the risks from internet use (Livingstone et al., 2017). On a broader level of generalisation, mediation strategies can be divided into two categories – enabling versus restrictive mediation (Livingstone et al., 2017). Enabling or active mediation involves social support by parents (or other socialising agents) in helping and guiding children in their internet use, while restrictive mediation consists of rules and restrictions (both social and technical) that parents or teachers set for their children (Kalmus, 2013). Moreover, research has identified a range of strategies, from the active mediation of internet use (actively discussing and/or sharing the activity) to the active mediation of internet safety (guiding the child in using the internet safely before, during or after the child's online activities); from restrictive mediation (the parent sets rules that restrict the child's use of apps, activities, etc.) to technical controls (software or parental controls to filter or restrict the child's internet use) and monitoring (checking on the child's online activities after use; Livingstone et al., 2011a).

Parental values and attitudes toward child rearing support the mediation of children's internet use; thus, we can view it as part of the socialisation processes guided by broader cultural ideologies and models of raising children (Kirwil, 2009). Furthermore, mediation is a dynamic process that arises from the everyday interactions between parents and children (Symons et al., 2017) and is related to the characteristics of the parents and children, including age, gender, etc. (Nikken & de Haan, 2015; Beyens & Valkenburg, 2019; Wright, 2017). Moreover, the use of these strategies depends on the parent-child relationship as a context and the approach to communication that the parents use during child rearing (Warren & Aloia, 2019); in other words, the aforementioned parenting styles. The authoritarian parenting style is related to restrictive parental mediation (Boniel-Nissim et al., 2020), while the authoritative style is related to restrictive and active mediation (Hwang et al., 2017). Permissive parents use restrictive and active mediation at the lowest levels compared to authoritative and authoritarian parents, while rejecting-neglecting parents largely dismiss the mediation strategies (Warren & Aloia, 2019).

In a mediatised world, parental styles and child well-being are influenced by and interwoven with the use of new technologies. In short, technology is a mediating factor in how family communication patterns facilitate family functioning and relationships, co-orienting through social interaction to create a shared social reality (Bridge & Schrodt, 2013; Hesse et al., 2017). The aforementioned parenting styles and mediation practices are associated with family communication patterns, which Koerner et al. (2018) define as central beliefs that determine much of how families interact and communicate. There are two basic orientations: conversation orientation refers to the extent to which families encourage a climate of unrestrained interaction among all family members about various topics, and

conformity orientation refers to the extent to which families encourage homogeneous attitudes, values, and beliefs. Studies reveal that conformity orientation is associated with controlling parenting (e.g., authoritarian, helicopter) (Odenweller et al., 2014).

2.4 Privacy in the digital realm

In the digital era, technologies are increasingly important as a way for families to exercise their rights and fulfil their needs to socialise, educate and entertain themselves. However, as highlighted in the previous chapters, technologies evolve and intertwine with our lives, creating new means for data collection and surveillance. From an economic perspective, data is being heralded as the new oil (Palmer, 2006) – one of the most valuable assets. The collection of this prized resource, however, is problematic when considering children – their media use is subjected to extensive commercial surveillance and data mining, often without the knowledge of them or their parents (Mascheroni, 2018; Montgomery et al., 2017). Companies are gathering more data from children than ever (Nyst et al., 2018), using a range of (often invasive) methods (cookies, advertising IDs, etc.) to track, for example, children’s online activities (Montgomery et al., 2017). Furthermore, children are often nudged into disclosing more personal information than is necessary (Shin & Kang, 2016) or as a trade-off to access a service (Leontiadis et al., 2012). Therefore, privacy, and particularly children’s rights to privacy, are under scrutiny as the technologies that increasingly mediate communication and information of all kinds become more and more pervasive (Stoilova et al., 2019).

Privacy has various definitions (see Newell, 1995; Margulis, 2003). However, a prevailing notion is that individuals seek to exercise control over the sharing or disseminating of their personal information. Already in 1967, Westin explained privacy as the right of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine if, when and to what extent information about them is shared with others. Furthermore, privacy is not simply the control of information but instead, the ability to assert control over a social situation (boyd & Marwick, 2011). Therefore, privacy should be understood as a flexible and fluid concept (Dourish & Bell, 2011) – it is socially contextual and networked (Marwick & boyd, 2014). The relational nature of privacy (particularly in diverse digital contexts) is also highlighted by Nissenbaum (2004; 2010) – her concept of “contextual integrity” understands privacy as “neither a right to secrecy nor a right to control, but a right to the appropriate flow of personal information” (2010, p. 132).

A child-oriented approach to privacy can be traced back to Wolfe and Laufer (1974; 1977). They claimed that privacy is vital to and inseparable from the individuation of the self during childhood, and controlling access to information becomes increasingly integral to children’s privacy conceptions (Laufer & Wolfe, 1977). Furthermore, the child’s developing efforts to manage information are rooted in their growing capacity to manage social interaction (Laufer & Wolfe,

1977). In more recent scholarly work, precisely this dynamic interplay of individual and relevant social contexts (family, peers, etc.) has become vital in understanding children's dealings with digitally networked devices (Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2019).

This brings us to the key privacy challenge currently posed by the media, as identified by Livingstone et al. (2019): “the simultaneous interconnectedness of voluntary sharing of personal information online, important for children's agency, and the attendant threats to their privacy, also important for their safety” (p. 3). Drawing on this tenet, three dimensions of children's online privacy help us understand the nature of the relationships and contexts in which children act in digital environments and how they understand the implications for their privacy (i.e., to their “appropriate flow of personal information”): interpersonal (i.e., related to other individuals), institutional (i.e., related to public or third sector organisations), and commercial (i.e., referring to the relationship with commercial organisations; Livingstone et al., 2019).

Children develop social competencies, such as maintaining private information on interpersonal, institutional, and commercial levels, primarily through family communication and socialisation procedures (Miller, 2009; Koerner et al., 2018). While children negotiate to share or withhold personal information in interpersonal contexts, institutional and commercial privacy are the areas that pose more complex challenges and where children are least able to comprehend and manage on their own (Livingstone et al., 2019). To understand how both children and their parents attempt to manage their private information on the aforementioned levels, Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM) offers an advantageous approach (Petronio, 2002). CPM recognises three general principles (i.e., “privacy ownership”, “privacy rules”, and “privacy turbulence”) to explain the privacy-related choices people make when disclosing information and emphasise the tensions that may arise between people when disrupting privacy boundaries (Petronio & Child, 2020).

One of the pillars of CPM is that people feel they are the owners of the information about themselves and feel entitled to control it (i.e., “privacy ownership”; Petronio, 2002). When someone allows access to their personal information, others are co-owners, creating a shared privacy boundary around that information. However, when personal information is shared, people (i.e., the original owners) believe they still own the rights to it and desire to further control access to it (Petronio, 2002). Hence, people negotiate or co-construct *privacy rules* concerning mutually held information (Petronio, 2002). Individuals develop a set of rules based on principles or values that are important to them. For instance, within a family, members bring their own sets of rules based on their individual privacy orientations learned or negotiated in their own families. Further, as these rules may differ, they negotiate and merge their rules as they become co-owners of the personal information they share (Petronio, 2013). When family members fail to negotiate or co-construct privacy rules, privacy regulation breakdowns (i.e., “privacy boundary turbulence”; Petronio, 2002) may occur. Therefore, regulating

privacy through establishing and coordinating privacy rules is a continuous communication process.

One of the implications of deep mediatisation is that it has weakened individuals' ability to control their private information. As Gligorijević (2019) writes, this is connected "not only to the mechanics of modern communications, including the speed and detail with which information can be obtained and shared but also to evolving social and cultural uses of communications technology, including why, when, how and how often individuals choose to create, use and share their own and others' private information" (p. 202). As I have stated before, families become meaningful only through communicative practices (Hepp, 2022); practices that also include creating, using, and sharing one's private information. Therefore, in the context of this thesis, understanding the role that privacy plays in families' communicative construction helps us gain a deeper understanding of how that construction transforms in the era of deep mediatisation.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will give an overview of the data collection and analysis that was carried out for this thesis to answer the research questions. I have made use of different quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of multiple methods was imperative given the mediatisation approach in my work, as mediatisation aims to “grasp the media and the related social transformations by asking primarily about the experiences of individuals on the micro level, the adaptations and activities of groups and organisations on the mezzo level and the related changes on the macro level of a society” (Krotz, 2017, p. 108), the use of different methods to understand such a complex phenomenon is ideal. Q methodology and semi-structured interviews (**STUDIES I–III**) helped me understand the consequences of deep mediatisation from an individual and familial perspective, while the quantitative survey method (**STUDY IV**) contributed to a broader and cross-cultural understanding of the process. My chosen methods support me in my aim (articulated in my research questions) to explore mediatisation from an empirical and context-specific point of view (i.e., in families). Furthermore, I wished to follow a child-oriented approach to mediatisation research, examining the lived experiences of children, also as expressed from their own perspective and with their own words, with a focus on the use of tracking technologies. Therefore, the need for child-friendly and ethical methods was imperative. I will explain the methods used for **STUDY I, II, III, and IV** in the following chapter.

3.1 Q methodology and semi-structured interviews

STUDIES I–III were based on Q methodology and semi-structured interviews with Estonian children and parents engaging in caring dataveillance (Lupton, 2020). Q methodology combines quantitative and qualitative methods and investigates patterns of subjectivity (e.g., views, and opinions) in social life (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In **STUDIES I–III**, I used the Q methodology to explore children’s and parents’ opinions and experiences regarding tracking devices. Q is a child-friendly participatory approach that can easily be tailored to children’s age and developmental stage – thus, even younger children can share their stories with relative ease (Sukk, 2022). All Q methodological studies have two key characteristics: (1) data collection in the form of Q sorts; and (2) following intercorrelation and by-person factor analysis of those Q sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 178). Q sorts are a collection of items which are actively rank-ordered by the participants according to a subjective measure such as “agreement/disagreement”. Through sorting the items, the participant provides a model of their viewpoint on the matter at hand (Stenner et al., 2003). In my research, the sorting was accompanied by interviews to probe for more information and requesting stories or examples helped to obtain a more profound sense of the participants’ viewpoints.

Altogether, my sample consisted of 20 children (10 boys and 10 girls) aged 8–13, and 29 parents (26 mothers and 3 fathers) of children aged 8–16. **STUDY I** focuses on the viewpoints of children (n=20, aged 8–13) and their parents (n=20, 18 mothers and 2 fathers). **STUDY II** uses the data from children (n=20, aged 8–13). For **STUDY III**, nine additional interviews (8 mothers and 1 father) with parents of older children (aged 14–16) were incorporated, increasing the total sample to 29. For **STUDY III**, I used only interview data (not Q sorting data) from all parents (n=29).

In Q methodology, a strategic approach to participant recruiting is typically preferred (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Therefore, I followed the principles of purposeful sampling (Zabala et al., 2018). I aimed to recruit families where the parents were engaged in caring dataveillance, and that the children were also aware of the fact. I found the parents (and subsequently, their children) using snowball sampling. Q methodology studies typically do not require a large sample because the approach has little interest in taking head counts or generalising to a population of people (Watts & Stenner, 2012). As Brown (1980) indicates, Q methodology generally aims only to establish the existence of particular viewpoints and thereafter to understand, explicate and compare them. The sample was relatively homogenous, which can be viewed as a potential limitation: all the participants in **STUDIES I, II** and **III** came from middle-class media-rich families, in which each family member had at least one personal device (e.g., smartphone, tablet, or laptop) in addition to shared technologies (e. g., TV and computer). The sample was heterogeneous regarding the length of time the child-tracking devices had been used, ranging from a couple of months to five to six years.

The data were collected from November 2019 to April 2020. I carried out most of the sorting and interviews face-to-face (38 out of 49). I started every data collection with individual interviews, following a semi-structured interview plan. I asked parents and children to reflect upon and provide examples of the advantages and problems associated with such technologies and consider their impact on their family relations. After the initial interview, I asked the participants to rank and order a set of statements related to tracking. I drew statements from discourses engaging with the subject of investigation (Watts & Stenner, 2012). To identify key themes and issues, I used academic and popular resources (e.g., articles from journals, newspapers, and internet discussions) to generate statements for the Q set. The process resulted in 28 statements for children and 38 statements for parents. During the interviews, I instructed the participants to sort these cards using a scale of –5 to +5, –5 meaning “most disagree with” and +5 meaning “most agree with”. The participants could also sort a card into the category “0”, meaning they were unsure whether they agreed or disagreed. The participants followed the free distribution condition – they could place any number of cards in any category. Although in Q methodology, it is possible to sort the cards following a pre-determined grid, statistical comparisons covering several distributions show that “distribution effects are virtually nil” (Brown, 1980, pp. 288–289), meaning that both methods are valid. Furthermore, I asked

open-ended questions during the Q sorting exercise, inviting comments on participants' ordering of statements in the Q sort. In face-to-face interviews, the whole process took 60–90 minutes for the parents and 30–45 minutes for the children. I photographed all the sorting configurations and recorded the interviews. I subsequently transcribed most face-to-face interviews (40), the rest (9) being transcribed by a bachelor student.

The aim of the data analysis for **STUDIES I** and **II** was to establish groupings of shared meanings; in other words, factors which identify a group of persons who have sorted the items similarly (Watts & Stenner, 2012). I did the by-person factor analysis of the sorted data separately for the parents and children. I used the dedicated free software Ken-Q Analysis (Banasick, 2019) and extracted factors from a correlation matrix using the centroid method. Most Q methodologists prefer this method as it allows exploration of the data through rotation until the best factor solution is achieved (Watts & Stenner, 2012). I rotated the extracted factors using the varimax technique to simplify the data structure and improve interpretability (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020). Following rotation, I selected factors for interpretation and created factor arrays or “best-estimate Q sorts” (Watts & Stenner, 2005). The factor arrays provided me with the basis for different factor interpretations that could uncover, understand and explain the viewpoint captured by those factors.

In **STUDIES I** and **II**, the interview data was only used to help in interpreting the factors. For example, when I uncovered a factor, I looked at the interview data to find quotes from both children and parents to illustrate it. However, the parents' interview data and comments from the sorting exercise were used for analysis in **STUDY III**, which aimed to uncover how tracking technologies facilitate and enable different modes of care. A four-phase care framework (caring about, taking care of, caregiving, care-receiving; Tronto, 1993) was the basis for the deductive content analysis of the interview data. Deductive content analysis is often used in cases where the researcher wishes to retest existing data in a new context, involving testing categories, concepts, models, or hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In my case, I wished to identify how parental use of tracking technologies can be understood as caring work. I used the four phases of care as a structured matrix, reviewed all the data for content and coded it for correspondence with the framework (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). I chose only aspects from the data that fit the matrix of analysis (Sandelowski, 1995).

3.2 Quantitative survey method

For **STUDY IV**, we used data from an extensive European survey obtained by the international research network EU Kids Online. The survey focuses on European children's online opportunities, risks, and safety. **STUDY IV** utilises the data collected in two waves: in 2010 in 25 countries (Livingstone et al., 2011b) and between 2017–2019 in 19 countries (Smahel et al., 2020). In 2010, the survey was financed by the EC Safer Internet Programme and centrally coordinated. In

each participating country, a random stratified sample of 1,000 children aged 9–16 who use the internet and one of their parents were interviewed. The interviews took place in the children’s homes. They were conducted face-to-face, supplemented with the completion of a private questionnaire for sensitive questions (Livingstone et al., 2011b).

In the second wave (2017–2019), national teams organised funding and data collection at the national level. The recommended minimum sample size per country was 1,000 children aged 9–17 who use the internet and one of their parents. Each participating country selected the sampling method. The second wave of the survey used three different methods of data collection: CASI/CAWI (computer-assisted self-interviewing/computer-assisted web interviewing), CAPI (computer-assisted personal interviewing) and PAPI (paper-assisted personal interviewing) (Smahel et al., 2020).

To ensure comparability, the analysis of **STUDY IV** is based on children’s data from 12 countries that participated in both waves of the survey. As all questions about parental mediation were asked of 11- to 16-year-olds only, the analysis includes the data from 9,495 children (4,768 girls and 4,727 boys) in the first wave and 11,434 children (5,603 girls and 5,831 boys) in the second wave. As the number and wording of the questions about parental mediation varied between the 2010 and 2018 versions of the children’s questionnaire, eight key indicators identified as directly comparable were used in the analysis. The answer scales were dichotomised to binary values (0 – no, 1 – yes), and the eight indicators were grouped into four indexes. The values of those four indexes were further summed into two aggregated indexes to achieve greater generalisability. To explore cross-national differences and temporal dynamics, a country-level analysis was employed. First, the prevalence of children using the internet daily and four parental mediation strategies across countries and years were analysed. Then, the mean values of two aggregated indexes were analysed. This resulted in clusters or groups of countries. The characteristics of the clusters and their composition across the two waves of the survey were compared to grasp broader patterns in parental mediation in the sample countries.

3.3 Ethical considerations

STUDIES I–III followed the institutional ethics principles of the University of Tartu. Furthermore, in my research, I have approached ethics as a balancing act “between our own needs as researchers and our obligations toward care for, and connection with, those who participate in our research” (Etherington, 2007, p. 614). Maintaining this kind of balance requires a continuous ethical awareness or *ethics in practice* rather than a one-time ethical decision-making moment (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Research involving children highlights the significance of ethics in practice, given the inherent power imbalance and the resulting increased risks involved (Gallagher, 2009).

There are multiple aspects of ethics in practice that I followed in my research. I recognised the complexity of consent by reframing it as a continuing process and being mindful of disparities between consent for parents and children (Warin, 2011). All of my participants in **STUDIES I–III** – the children and parents – volunteered to participate in the research project. The parents signed written consent forms for themselves and their children. While the parents’ consent was important, I always aimed to gain consent from the children as well. Therefore, before interviewing the children, I explained the purpose and process of the research and asked whether they agree to participate. Furthermore, as we moved from the interview to the sorting exercise, I once again asked whether the child is ready and willing to continue; in other words, I paid attention to the processual nature of consent. I took the same steps in the interviews with the parents. Moreover, I assured all my participants that relevant steps would be taken to protect their confidentiality (e.g., information would not be shared with their family members) and that they could drop out of the study at any time.

During interviews with the children, I paid particular attention to nonverbal signals – if a child begins the interview happily, but then appears to become bored, it may signal that the child does not want to continue (Warin, 2011). During my interviews, I did not observe such behaviour, and during the reflections at the end of each interview, the children assured me they enjoyed the experience and were motivated to participate. Some children expressed their happiness to be included in an activity they felt was “adult-like” – the research experience gave them an opportunity to feel valued and have their opinions heard.

I believe that my choice of methodology played a key role in the children’s positive experiences and allowed me to follow ethics in practice. Barker and Weller (2003) contend that research involving children is more ethical when the research offers something positive for them. This can be achieved by devising methods that are experienced positively by the children; that is, participatory methods (Warin, 2011). As I have argued elsewhere (see also Sukk, 2022), Q methodology is a great tool for exploring children’s perspectives – its engaging nature helps to maintain children’s interest and express themselves in a systematic manner.

Lastly, the ethical dimension of research is linked to the researcher’s readiness to reveal their participation and step out from the safety of anonymity (Etherington, 2007). Warin (2011) suggests recognising similarities and identifications with the participants. Indeed, several aspects of the children’s lives or their parents’ practices reminded me of my own childhood or my views on child rearing. While these identifications might have helped build rapport between me and some of my participants, they also might have created blind spots for me as a researcher. Therefore, I acknowledge that as a researcher I was influencing my participants’ perceptions, and they were also influencing me.

The EU Kids Online project data used in **STUDY IV** received ethical clearance from the London School of Economics’ Research Ethics Committee. All aspects of the methodology and approaches to implementing the survey were developed with child and respondent well-being in mind (see Livingstone et al., 2011b). For

the 2nd wave of data collection, the questionnaire administration followed basic ethical guidelines in all countries, adhering to the national rules and conditions. Approval of the ethical body was obtained in all countries where necessary (see Zlamal et al., 2020).

Having discussed this dissertation's methodological foundations and ethical considerations, I will present the results of **STUDIES I, II, III** and **IV** in the following chapter.

4. RESULTS

Five inextricably linked quantitative trends characterise deep mediatisation: differentiation, connectivity, omnipresence, the rapid pace of innovation, and datafication (Hepp, 2020). In the following chapters, I use the distinction of these trends to provide an initial understanding of the media-related changes we face in families; in other words, I aim to research mediatisation in the context of families, relying on empirical examples of tracking technologies. However, I wish to emphasise that these trends do not occur in a linear fashion, and it is by no means certain whether or not these trends will continue and what other trends will emerge (Hepp, 2020). Furthermore, all five trends are certainly not globally homogeneous and differ in terms of their intensity and their characteristics from region to region and domain to domain. Most of my empirical data come from Estonia, one of the most advanced digital countries (Kotka, Vargas, & Korjus, 2015) and one of the most easy-going nations in Europe in the context of digital privacy (Eurobarometer, 2011), which may have shaped my results.

4.1 Differentiation

Differentiation in the media means that the types of media and their functionalities have increased over recent decades (Hepp, 2020). Digitalisation has brought with it various media that are invariably based on software and fundamentally digital, making communicative practices possible across them all (Manovich, 2013). I argue that the aforementioned variety of media and their functionalities lay the foundation for diverse technology-related communicative practices in families; for example, parental mediation, location tracking, etc. (**STUDIES I–IV**).

In my research, I have witnessed the differentiation of media in families first-hand – children and parents use various apps and devices to engage in caring dataveillance. Families have made use of differentiation, switching between diverse technologies to find the ones best suited for their needs (**STUDIES I–III**). I have also observed that the differentiation of media gives rise to a variety of contradictory impacts – while parents engage in mediation to maximise their children’s benefits and minimise risks from internet use, the same activities may suppress children’s freedom to explore and grow on their own (**STUDY IV**). Furthermore, parents often justify the use of technology in familial settings by wishing to keep children safe, disregarding the potential consequences, such as deresponsibilisation (Hunt, 2003); that is, transferring responsibility to others (**STUDY II**). I propose that parental tracking may promote a certain degree of irresponsibility in children. For example, in my research (**STUDY II**), many children believed that they are not responsible for their own safety and well-being, leaving that task to their parents. This perspective also illustrates that these children have “blind trust” in the technologies used in familial settings. I also conclude that when tracking practices are in place, parents may deny children the opportunity to show they are capable of being responsible in the first place. This

development may have a profound impact on the children's lives at a later stage, as problems could arise from a lack of autonomy and resilience.

The differentiation of media often allows optional use. It was evident from my research that the ways families use tracking technologies are diverse, and the actual purpose of their use often deviates from the intended purpose. For example, a well-intentioned motive to keep an eye on the children can easily translate into constant spying (**STUDIES I–III**). This possible development was recognised by the parents themselves. Many of them claimed during the interviews that they have had experiences where they subconsciously kept checking the location of their child several times every hour and described these instances as unnecessary surveillance on their behalf (**STUDY III**).

I also propose that the differentiation of media might weaken the binding power of communicative practices within families. Like internet-based platforms, which are understood as supporting “weak ties” instead of “strong” relations (Rainie & Wellman, 2012), technological devices meant to increase communication within families can minimise day-to-day interactions in the direct living environment. For example, in my research, both children and their parents admitted that the possibility to use various tracking apps and devices makes phone calls or face-to-face discussions about family members' daily schedules and movements redundant (**STUDIES II, III**).

4.2 Connectivity

Various media are interconnected, owing to their digitalisation and the infrastructure of the internet (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). The ability to connect globally across various media means that families are constructed across various media. I observed in my research that technologies and their connectivity provide various advantages for parents and children. For example, such devices have become valuable parental aids enabling parents to craft their identities as loving and committed parents (**STUDIES I, III**). Parents view caring dataveillance as being attentive to the needs of their children and making sure they are safe – the connectivity enables parents to look out for where their children are, what they are doing, and who they are with. For children, this connectivity offers feelings of safety and being cared for; that is, the connectivity offered by tracking apps and devices supports the idea that parents can help their children in case of trouble (**STUDIES I, II**). Therefore, while technology may only create the illusion of safety (e.g., tracking can easily be broken off), it offers reassurance to the children and their parents. It seemingly eases the unnecessary worries of parents, empowering them (**STUDIES I, III**). Furthermore, technology can empower children too – it has the ability to offer greater freedom in both online and offline settings (**STUDIES I, II, IV**).

Consequently, families are at least partly held together by technologically based communication. A noticeable illustration of this phenomenon is increased active mediation across different European countries (**STUDY IV**). Technological connectedness and its omnipresence (discussed in detail in Chapter 4.3)

have put technology *on the spot*, meaning that parents have taken an active role in their children's online (and offline) lives – this is revealed in the increase in active mediation of internet safety, among other trends. Hence, the universal increase in active mediation is a function of the deepening mediatisation, by which digital media are profoundly integrated into family life.

4.3 Omnipresence

The social, temporal, and spatial spread of media relates to their omnipresence (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). In families, this is often manifested in a plugged-in parenting practice, where various mediation activities support an always-on child-rearing routine. As I identified in my research, the increase in the active mediation of internet safety in many European countries can be underpinned by this emerging parenting routine, also referred to as *transcendent parenting*, a practice in which parents “can and do transcend every realm of their children's lives” both in online and offline settings (Lim, 2020, p. 135; **STUDY IV**).

I argue that the omnipresence embedded into tracking technologies helps parents fulfil their parental duties (e.g., keeping an eye on their children's whereabouts) from a distance (**STUDIES I–III**). As many of the parents shared in my interviews, tracking technologies allow them to stay in control, keep an eye on the movements of their children and ensure they safely reach their destination (**STUDY III**). Moreover, tracking is often viewed as a precautionary caregiving practice that alleviates parents' fears and doubts, illustrating the parents' approach to caregiving – it is transcendent or not limited to specific situations, requiring thinking at least one step ahead (**STUDY III**). Furthermore, as tracking is often bidirectional, meaning the children can also track their parents (**STUDIES I–III**), I posit that the omnipresence of the practices of caring dataveillance helps the children to fulfil their needs or *be a child*, from a distance. For example, as the children shared in my interviews, many of them have grown accustomed to tracking and experience positive emotions (e.g., feeling of safety etc.) with it (**STUDIES I, II**).

While the omnipresence of today's media offers potential benefits for both children and parents, I argue that tracking has become more of a parental right, as in many families tracking is not discussed between family members (**STUDIES I, II**). I witnessed in my studies that both parents and children may believe that parents have the right to control their children (particularly their whereabouts; **STUDIES I, II**). Therefore, it is clear that the parents often failed to involve their children in the decisions related to the adoption of tracking technologies. Many of the children, while hoping to be able to make decisions, have come to terms with this arrangement. For example, most of the children who participated in my research have not raised the topic in discussions with their parents and have not tried to escape caring dataveillance (**STUDIES I, II**).

This conformity, however, does not exclude children's diverse opinions and attitudes towards tracking (**STUDIES I, II**). I observed that while compliant children do not perceive tracking as a practice through which they are giving up

control of their private information, privacy-sensitive children have reservations about it. Autonomous children, in particular, believe that parents should not track their children without discussing it first; being unaware of tracking could breach confidentiality and compromise their sense of trust in their parents. The inability to include children in decisions regarding the use of technology could bring about conflicts in families. I argue that it is crucial that parents discuss the use of tracking apps with their children to properly include them in the decision-making process affecting their everyday life. The described omnipresence, therefore, refers to an authoritarian parental style, discussed further in Chapter 4.4.

4.4 Rapid pace of innovation

A rapid pace of innovation has accompanied recent media developments (Krotz, 2017). This means that the time sequence of more or less fundamental media innovations has shortened over the past few decades, at least in the perception of many media users (Krotz, 2017). I contend that this perceived pace brings about an adjustment pressure: caring dataveillance is constructed as *good parenting*; that is, parents are expected to use tracking apps as a means to keep their children safe (**STUDY I**). The described pressure exploits parental fears; for example, parents in my interviews discussed the fear of not knowing their children's whereabouts or not being able to help when they get lost (**STUDY III**). Therefore, this pressure enables the further datafication of family life (see Chapter 4.5).

In **STUDY IV**, I identified that active parental mediation has significantly increased in several European countries; for example, in Estonia, France, Germany, Norway, and others. I conclude that this increase illustrates how parents have tried to keep up with the rapid pace of innovation: parents are most likely constantly developing their skills and actively shaping their children's media use. However, not all parents can keep up with this rapid pace of innovation, as socially disadvantaged parents and children are "experiencing a lack of options for participating in contemporary mediatised society in an appropriate and beneficial way" (Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2019, p. 158).

I wish to stress that appropriating and adjusting to specific media innovations means being in a power position within the family (Schulz et al., 2011). As parents do not discuss the adoption of tracking technologies with their children, and the children may not always understand their parent's motivation for using these media (**STUDIES I, II**; see Chapter 4.3), parents are also not giving children the opportunity to express their agency in the process of the rapid pace of innovation. In this way, the parents are in a power position (**STUDIES I–III**). Moreover, as many families may not be able to keep up with the rapid pace of innovation, they are in a disadvantaged position, also referring to questions of power imbalance and social inequality between figurations (i.e., individual families).

The parents' inability to include children in adjusting to media innovations refers to the conclusion in my research that the authoritarian parenting style is still evident among Estonian parents (**STUDY I**). While the societal changes in Estonia have started to reshape parental beliefs and practices in the direction of

greater autonomy and self-direction in children, parents are struggling between old and new socialisation paradigms (Talves & Kalmus, 2015; Tulviste, 2019; **STUDY IV**): child obedience-oriented child rearing values continue to play an essential role in family processes and dynamics (**STUDY I**).

4.5 Datafication

A growing number of media are based on software. As a result, through the use of these media, we leave *digital traces* (Karanasios et al., 2013), data that can be aggregated and processed in automated ways based on algorithms. These algorithms are also the basis of parental mediation, including continuous surveillance or dataveillance.

I identified that parents feel pressured to take responsibility for finding, generating, and using digitised information about childcare (**STUDY I**; see also chapter 4.4). Dataveillance can negatively restrict the autonomy and privacy of those being watched; however, in family settings, it can also express love, attention and care (Lupton, 2020; **STUDIES I, III**). In the realm of caring dataveillance, technologies have come to represent the materialities of care, facilitating and enabling different modes of care (**STUDY III**). Tracking technologies, in particular, assume a broad role in families' care arrangements and the use of tracking technologies is rationalised as a practice that makes caring dataveillance possible.

The datafication and previously mentioned trends (like differentiation and rapid pace of innovation) offer new surveillance possibilities for parents and other agents, raising the question of locational privacy. Families often have no idea who uses the data and how (**STUDIES I, II**). While parents believe that technologies could pose an additional risk to children's privacy and personal freedom due to potential third-party breaches, they generally consider such a threat to be almost non-existent. Furthermore, parents perceive privacy issues as irrelevant or incomprehensible to younger children (**STUDY III**), although some of the children have a well-developed understanding of potential privacy breaches (**STUDY II**). Therefore, my empirical analyses revealed the *ambivalences* (Hepp, 2020) associated with tracking practices and technologies – while parents (and some children) are aware that they produce data which can be used by tech companies for various purposes, they accept this as an ancillary consequence of their practices.

I contend that parental monitoring – or tracking – contributes to the normalisation of the datafication of family life. Children, in particular, become used to dataveillance practices and do not question the authority or motives of their parents (**STUDIES I–III**). Children are ready to place trust in technology and in their parents using it to help them whenever necessary. Furthermore, some parents explained that tracking their children from when they got their first phone (as one parent puts it – tracking is enabled “by default”) has become an integral part of family life.

5. DISCUSSION

My thesis aimed to explore how the communicative construction of families is transformed via the changes in contemporary media; in other words, through deep mediatisation, and to identify the consequences of this transformation. My contribution to the field lies in the in-depth exploration into the communicative construction of families through tracking technologies and families' profound entanglement in the trends of deep mediatisation. In the following chapter, I will discuss my results. The discussion is structured based on the main topics arising from the research questions.

5.1 Re-figuration of families: external and internal perspectives

In **STUDIES I–IV**, I have shown that technology increasingly helps make up families – various digital technologies and their functionalities play an essential role in the communicative construction of families. The constructivist approach has helped me understand how members interact and co-create the family via digital means, and how technology is one possible driving force of the transformation of families. This *re-figuration* – the transformation of figurations (like families) and their interrelatedness to society – refers to a fundamental, structural shift in human relationships and practices (Hepp, 2020). In my research, I have observed a re-figuration of family life – **through a digital media ensemble, it is possible to maintain family relations and *do family* even when dispersed across space and time.**

To grasp the complexity of the re-figuration of families, I look at the internal and external perspectives of families as figurations (Hepp, 2020). The *internal perspective* refers to the question of how individual figurations are transformed by deep mediatisation (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). First, the actor constellations within families have changed. This change is evident in the shift in the roles and responsibilities of family members: the emergence and use of digital parenting tools (e.g., tracking devices) have expanded the traditional parenting duties by adding a technological dimension – parents can, and often are expected to, parent from a distance (**STUDIES I, III**). While in a sense, parents have more responsibilities than before, children seem to have less: parental tracking, for example, may promote a certain degree of irresponsibility in children (**STUDY II**). However, as tracking is often bidirectional (i.e., children can also track their parents (**STUDIES I–III**)), the omnipresence of the practices of caring dataveillance helps the children fulfil their needs, or *be children*, from a distance.

The relations in actor constellations also operate as power relations (Hepp, 2020). Despite their potentially empowering and inclusive character, I argue that digital technologies can often exacerbate the existing power relations between parents and children, and between figurations (e.g., families). For example, as the

adoption of tracking apps is not discussed with children, and they may not always understand their parents' motivations behind these technologies, parents are maintaining their power position (**STUDIES I–III**). These relations in the actor constellations in families refer to the authoritarian style of parenting that is still evident among Estonian parents (**STUDY I**).

Second, I wish to discuss whether there are changes in the families' frames of relevance. I argue that the use of digital technologies is in itself a frame of relevance, guiding the constituting practices of the family as a figuration. This "frame of technology" defines the family members' orientation in practice, and therefore the figuration's character. Furthermore, the prevalent frame for a family could also be an orientation towards parental mediation or caring dataveillance. These changes in families' frames of relevance refer to the normalisation of parental monitoring (**STUDIES I, IV**), which in turn contributes to the function of the deepening mediatisation.

The communicative practices of families have also shifted. I view these changes as closely connected to the families' frames of relevance: an orientation towards parental mediation, for example, would not be possible without families coming together via technologies and tools that allow monitoring to take place. Therefore, mediating children's internet safety or tracking their whereabouts can be viewed as communicative practices that have become integral to the everyday lives of many families (**STUDIES I–IV**).

The *external perspective* is concerned with the question of the transformation of the interrelationship between figurations (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). In my research, I have observed shifts in the meaningful arrangements of figurations, indicating changes in the interrelatedness of figurations (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). I am referring to the normalisation of active mediation as part of good parenting, which has become an intrinsic part of daily life for many European families (**STUDY IV**).

Furthermore, deep mediatisation makes new figurations possible, such as on-line gatherings on various platforms or through apps (Hepp, 2020). For example, the users of a particular tracking app can be considered a platform collectivity; that is, figurations that group around that digital platform (Hepp, 2020). These collectivities are based on common frames of relevance (caring dataveillance) and are formed, via platform mediation, into particular constellations of actors. It is in this sense that they constitute a figuration. However, the individual users who form the basis of these figurations are typically unaware of their entirety and do not develop a shared 'we'. More often than not, such figurations are formed technologically due to data processing – these figurations are "collectivities without communitisation" (Couldry & Hepp 2017).

In times of deep mediatisation, we are confronted with a particular form of transformation which we can call recursive transformation – it indicates that "rules are reapplied to the entity that generated them" (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 217). As discussed in Chapter 2.2, many parental practices are now entangled with digital media, and the algorithms they are based on involve a new kind of recursivity. Incorporating digital media and their infrastructures into parenting

leads to the continuous processing of data, which is the basis for adopting these media. As the behaviour of family members is continuously tracked, it could be the basis for generating new functions (among other consequences); for example, parents could monitor their children's health data in real-time through smart watches. Through these development loops, the transformation of society is, in many ways, a transformation that occurs through digital media and their infrastructures (Hepp, 2020). Therefore, I argue that **digital parenting is in itself recursive, and appropriating its practices can stabilise the core trends of deep mediatisation** (e.g., differentiation, the rapid pace of innovation, datafication).

Furthermore, I posit that the normalisation of mediation and caring dataveillance limit the possibilities of even imagining alternatives to the datafication of everyday life (i.e., data processing and analysis by companies, government agencies). There is a common acceptance of data collection, which means that the ongoing analysis of data is taken for granted as data-driven surveillance is justified. Many individuals tend to adopt an ambivalent stance (Hepp, 2020) towards managing their use of media technologies. Despite being somewhat sceptical about these technologies (**STUDIES I–III**), they still use them due to the benefits they offer or because of social pressure from others within an individual's figuration – as is often the case with children and their parents.

5.2 Deep mediatisation trends in familial settings

In this thesis, I have approached families as communicative figurations. Like many other figurations, families are moulded by deep mediatisation; that is, media transforms the constellations of actors in figurations, their frames of relevance and communicative practices (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018; see Chapter 5.1). As discussed in Chapter 4, there are five dominant trends of deep mediatisation: a differentiation of media, increasing connectivity through various media, their rising omnipresence, the rapid pace of innovation, and the datafication of human interaction through media (Hepp, 2020). It depends on the social domain how strongly these trends shape the related figurations. Based on the research discussed, we can assume several possible consequences of deep mediatisation for families. I will present the potential effects, relying on aspects already identified by other authors and my own research.

We may see an **increase in the chances of participating in social domains** (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). On the one hand, this refers to the potential empowering and inclusive character that digital technologies bring to social domains like families. Tracking, for example, offers reassurance to the parents and seemingly eases unnecessary worries, empowering them (**STUDIES I, III**). Furthermore, technology can empower the children too – it can offer greater freedom in both online and offline settings (**STUDIES I, II, IV**). On the other hand, the increase in participation is achieved through ubiquitous connectivity; that is, the ability to connect globally across various media, and craft identities as loving parents and cared-for children (**STUDIES I, III**).

Therefore, connectivity brings with it the **spatial extension of communicative figurations** (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). In addition to the geographical widening (e.g., parents and children can “do family” across the globe), the connectivity also allows for extension through the online world. In many European countries, we can identify an emerging parenting routine, also referred to as *transcendent parenting*, whereby parents “can and transcend every realm of their children’s lives” in both online and offline settings (Lim, 2020, p. 135; **STUDY IV**). This always-on parenting allows me to argue that one consequence of deep mediatisation is also the **temporal extension of communicative figurations** – the seemingly ceaseless flow of parenting is made possible through digital technologies.

Although I have argued that technological devices can increase connectivity, the opposite, in a sense, is also feasible – digital technologies can **decrease the depth of connectivity**, weakening the binding power of communicative practices within families. Like internet-based platforms, which are understood as supporting *weak ties* instead of *strong* relations (Rainie & Wellman, 2012), technological devices can potentially minimise day-to-day interactions in the direct living environment (**STUDIES I–III**).

There are **innate contradictions** in the consequences of deep mediatisation. For example, while parents mediate to maximise their children’s benefits and minimise risks from internet use, the same activities may suppress their children’s freedom to explore and grow independently (**STUDY IV**). The differentiation of media can therefore give rise to various contradictory impacts (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). These contradictions are connected to another consequence of deep mediatisation – the **optionality of use** (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018); that is, media users can choose from the many available functions of the media. In my research, I witnessed how families using digital technologies, particularly tracking devices, are diverse. Furthermore, the actual purpose of their use can deviate from the intended purpose – keeping an eye on the children can easily translate into constant spying (**STUDIES I–III**). Moreover, the optionality of use gives way to the recursivity discussed in Chapter 5.1 – the diverse behaviour of family members on these platforms is continuously tracked, which could be the basis for generating new functions.

These new functions contribute to another consequence of deep mediatisation: **acceleration and increasing immediacy** (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). This means that the time sequence of media innovations has – at least in the perception of many individuals – shortened (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). Moreover, this perceived pace brings about adjustment pressure; that is, parents are expected to keep up with the practices of *good parenting* using technology and particularly **social surveillance** (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018; **STUDIES I–IV**). Furthermore, the example of surveillance demonstrates the recursive character of deep mediatisation (see Chapter 5.1). Caring dataveillance, for example, would not be possible without digital technologies and the accompanying data. The practice itself creates additional data that can be exploited by the members of one’s figuration (e.g.,

parents tracking their children's whereabouts) or private companies as the basis of their services and business models.

Therefore, my studies (I–IV) refer to the normalisation of parental mediation and caring dataveillance as part of good parenting and deepening the mediation of family life. This normalisation indicates the power of media technologies to **stabilise the sociality in communicative figurations** (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). However, it is essential to note that the deepening mediation might also result in **segmentation, exclusion, and division**: I argue that not all families can keep up with this process, as socially disadvantaged parents and children face a shortage of suitable and advantageous opportunities to engage with modern mediated society (Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2019; **STUDY IV**).

5.3 Communicative construction and privacy management

The privacy of families has recently been under scrutiny, as technologies that mediate communication and information of all kinds have become increasingly pervasive (Stoilova et al., 2019). To understand how families, and particularly children, perceive the implications of digital technologies for their privacy, I will follow Livingstone et al. (2019), who identified three privacy dimensions: interpersonal (i.e., related to other individuals), institutional (i.e., related to public or third sector organisations), and commercial (i.e., referring to the relationship with commercial organisations) (Livingstone et al., 2019).

In my research for this thesis (**STUDIES I, II**), I focused mainly on the interpersonal contexts – how children and their parents coordinate their privacy boundaries and negotiate privacy rules around tracking technologies (Petronio, 2002). Many respondent children saw their parents as *confidants* (Petronio, 2002); that is, people worthy of access and co-ownership of their private information. Most of the children did not perceive tracking as a practice through which they were giving up control of their private information. Therefore, families viewed tracking as a positive practice that did not breach their sense of privacy. However, even though the children recognised their parents as confidants, they still expected tracking to be coordinated within the family – the children wished to be informed about tracking and expected to have a chance to negotiate their privacy boundaries. However, such caring dataveillance was seldom discussed in families. Ignoring and disregarding children's viewpoints on the matter might lead to a breach of confidentiality and “privacy boundary turbulence” (Petronio, 2002) in the parent-child relationship. I conclude that parental monitoring, such as tracking, contributes to the normalisation of caring dataveillance – children are used to tracking practices and do not question the authority of their parents. The normalisation of dataveillance using digital technologies can therefore lead to a **normalisation of the loss of interpersonal privacy for the children as privacy boundaries and rules can often easily be disregarded, overstepped, or simply not negotiated by their parents.**

Children develop social competencies, such as maintaining private information on interpersonal, institutional, and commercial levels, primarily through family communication and socialisation procedures (Miller, 2009; Koerner et al., 2018). As illustrated above, privacy in families is more or less negotiated. Consequently, the regulation of privacy through establishing and coordinating privacy rules is a continuous communication process, **meaning that this part of the communicative construction of a family is fundamental to how children learn to manage their private information.** Furthermore, I argue that the communicative construction of families contributes to a more general understanding of privacy. Therefore, **how interpersonal privacy is managed in families could be a prerequisite for children’s attitudes and knowledge about institutional and commercial privacy.** The latter two are the areas that pose more complex challenges and where children cannot comprehend and manage independently (Livingstone et al., 2019). From my research (**STUDIES I, II**), it was evident that institutional and commercial privacy is often neglected in the day-to-day life of families, as parents, in particular, dismiss the topic. Although some parents believed that tracking technologies could pose an additional risk to children’s privacy and personal freedom due to potential third-party breaches, they considered such a threat almost non-existent: “Why would someone track me?” was a reasoning heard from many parents. Furthermore, parents perceive privacy issues (whether interpersonal or commercial) as incomprehensible to younger children (**STUDY III**), although some of the children have a well-developed understanding of potential privacy breaches (**STUDY II**).

One of the implications of deep mediatisation is that it has weakened individuals’ ability to control their private information (Gligorijević, 2019) – differentiation, the rapid pace of innovation and datafication offer new surveillance possibilities for parents and other agents. Furthermore, my studies have shown that families often have no idea who uses their data and how (**STUDIES I, II**). As the trends of deep mediatisation continue to develop, we must try to keep privacy issues in families under scrutiny, as it plays a crucial role in how children and their important others (e.g., parents) learn to create and share their private information. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider how such (in)voluntary sharing of data starts to play a role in shaping the opportunities and futures of children and their families.

There is no doubt that children’s lives in technologically developed societies are being shaped, analysed, and influenced through well-intentioned but also often commercialised desires (i.e., surveillance, targeted advertising etc.), enacted by technological companies and platforms. Therefore, as a practical implication of my thesis, I wish to underline the need for a critical awareness of the scope and power of these companies, both on familial and societal (including legislative) levels.

CONCLUSIONS

My conclusions are based on my three research questions which I will answer in this chapter.

I. How does technology transform the communicative construction of families in times of deep mediatisation?

- We can observe a remarkable re-figuration of family life. Through a digital media ensemble, it is possible to maintain family relations and “do family” even when dispersed across space and time (**STUDIES I–IV**).
- The actor constellations in families have changed; that is, there is a noticeable transformation in the roles and responsibilities of family members, as indicated by the adoption of digital parenting tools such as tracking devices. These technologies add to traditional parenting duties, allowing parents to fulfil their responsibilities even from afar, which has become a standard expectation (**STUDIES I, III**).
- Although digital technologies have the potential to empower and include, they can also intensify pre-existing power dynamics between parents and children. This is exemplified by the use of tracking apps, which parents may not always discuss with their children and the reasoning behind which the children may need help comprehending. As a result, parents may reinforce their position of authority (**STUDIES I–III**).
- Digital technologies provide a frame of relevance that shapes the practices that constitute the family as a figuration. This *frame of technology* influences the family members’ actions, and therefore defines the nature of the family as a whole (i.e., as a figuration). Additionally, the prevalent frame could orient the family towards parental mediation or caring data-veillance. The normalisation of parental monitoring (**STUDIES I, IV**) represents a shift in the family’s frame of relevance and contributes to the increasing role of technology in their lives. The deepening mediatisation results from these changes, and vice versa – mediatisation on a broad level causes these changes in families.
- The communicative practices of families have also shifted: families come together via technologies and tools that allow monitoring to occur. Therefore, mediating children’s internet safety or tracking their whereabouts can be viewed as communicative practices that have become integral to many families’ everyday lives (**STUDIES I–IV**).
- There are shifts in the meaningful arrangements of figurations, indicating the changes in the interrelatedness of figurations; for example, the normalisation of active mediation as part of good parenting, which has become an intrinsic part of day-to-day life for many families in Europe (**STUDY IV**).

- Deep mediatisation also makes new figurations possible. For instance, a group of individuals who use a specific tracking app can be seen as a platform collectivity. These collectivities are formed through platform mediation, based on shared frames of relevance, such as caring dataveillance, and are structured as distinct constellations of actors. In this way, they constitute a figuration (**STUDIES I–III**).
- The practice of digital parenting is recursive, reinforcing and stabilising the core trends of deep mediatisation, such as differentiation, rapid innovation, datafication, etc. (**STUDIES I–IV**).

II. What are the consequences of deep mediatisation for the family as a communicative figuration?

- We may see an increase in the chances of participation in social domains. This refers to digital technologies’ empowering and inclusive nature for social domains such as families. For instance, tracking provides reassurance to parents and alleviates unnecessary concerns, empowering them (**STUDIES I, III**). Furthermore, technology can empower children too – it can offer greater freedom in both online and offline settings (**STUDIES I, II, IV**).
- Connectivity brings with it the spatial extension of communicative figurations. In addition to the geographical widening (e.g., parents and children can “do family” across the globe), the connectivity also allows for an extension through the online world. This always-on parenting allows me to argue that one consequence of deep mediatisation is also the temporal extension of communicative figurations – the seemingly ceaseless flow of parenting is made possible through digital technologies.
- Digital technologies can decrease the *depth* of connectivity, weakening the binding power of communicative practices within families. Technological devices can minimise day-to-day interactions in the direct living environment (**STUDIES I–III**).
- The differentiation of media can give rise to a variety of contradictory impacts. For instance, as parents use mediation to maximise the benefits of their children’s internet use and minimise associated risks, these actions may hinder the children’s freedom to explore and grow independently (**STUDY IV**).
- Another consequence of deep mediatisation is the optionality of use; that is, the media users can choose from the many available media functions. The ways families use digital technologies, particularly tracking devices, are diverse (**STUDIES I–III**).

- Deep mediatisation brings about an adjustment pressure – parents are expected to keep up with the practices of *good parenting* using technology and particularly social surveillance (**STUDIES I–IV**). This social surveillance refers to the deepening mediatisation of family life.

III. How do family members manage their privacy related to digital technologies?

- Parental monitoring; for example, tracking, contributes to the normalisation of caring dataveillance – children are used to tracking practices and do not question the authority of their parents. The normalisation of caring dataveillance can therefore lead to a normalisation of the loss of interpersonal privacy for children, as privacy boundaries and rules can often easily be disregarded, overstepped, or simply not negotiated by their parents (**STUDIES I, II**).
- The regulation of privacy through establishing and coordinating privacy rules is a continuous communication process in families, meaning that this part of the communicative construction of a family is fundamental to how children learn to manage their private information (**STUDIES I, II**).
- The communicative construction of families contributes to a more general understanding of privacy. Therefore, how interpersonal privacy is managed in families could be a prerequisite for children’s attitudes and knowledge about institutional and commercial privacy (**STUDIES I, II**).
- Both institutional and commercial privacy is often neglected in the day-to-day life of families, as parents, in particular, dismiss the topic (**STUDIES I, II**). Parents perceive privacy issues (whether interpersonal or commercial) as incomprehensible to younger children (**STUDY III**), although some of the children have a well-developed understanding of potential privacy breaches (**STUDY II**).

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Perekondade kommunikatiivne konstrueerimine: tärvavad trendid süvameediastumise ajastul

Tänapäeval on perekonnad üha enam ümbritsetud meediast, see tähendab erinevatest tehnoloogilistest seadmetest ja suhtlust vahendavatest keskkondadest. Saame öelda, et suurem osa perekondadest läänemaailmas on meediastunud, sest perekondade struktuur ja pereliikmete vaheline suhtlus on meediast sõltuv (Krotz, 2017): meedia kujundab ümber, kuidas lapsed ja nende vanemad elavad, mängivad, töötavad ja suhtlevad. Samaaegselt on praegune meedia rohkem kui lihtsalt suhtlusvahendid – meedia võimaldab näiteks koguda kasutajate kohta reaalaajas andmeid (Hepp ja Hasebrink, 2018). Selline andmete kogumine tekitab tõsisid küsimusi laste ja vanemate privaatsuse ning nende õiguste kohta – meedia tarbimine on enamasti seotud laialdase jälgimisega ning sageli toimub see kasutajate teadmata (Mascheroni, 2018). Neid andmeid kasutatakse erinevate automatiseeritud töötlusvormide allikana, millest on saanud meie sotsiaalse maailma konstrueerimise üks olulisi lülisid (Hepp, 2020). See hiljutine digiteerimise ja andmestumise laine on toonud meid uude süvameediastumise ajastusse, kus meediatehnoloogiad on põimunud meie igapäevaeluga (Hepp, 2016). Süvameediastumise ajastut iseloomustavad viis põhilist suundumust: *diferentseerumine, ühenduvus, kõikjalolek, kiire innovatsioon ja andmestumine*. Need suundumused täidavad töös raamistavat rolli.

Oma doktoritöös soovisin mõista, kuidas muutub perekondade kommunikatiivne konstrueerimine ühes meediaga, ja mis on selle muutuse tagajärjed. Minu töö keskmes on perekonnad kui kommunikatiivsed figuratsioonid, mis on üha enam ehitatud üles tehnoloogiakasutusele. Tehnoloogia on üks võimalikke jõudusid, mis toob kaasa muutusi perekondades, ja tekitab küsimusi privaatsuse kohta süvameediastumise ajastul.

Püstitasin doktoritöös kolm uurimisküsimust, millele vastamiseks kasutasin erinevaid uurimismeetodeid: Q-metodoloogiat, poolstruktureeritud intervjuusid ja kvantitatiivset küsitlusmeetodit. Töö koosneb neljast uurimusest (tähistatud Rooma numbritega). Esitan peamised tulemused uurimisküsimuste järgi struktureerituna.

1. Kuidas muudab tehnoloogia süvameediastumise ajastul perekondade kommunikatiivset konstrueerimist?

- Näeme perekonnaelu märkimisväärset ümberkujundamist (*re-figuration*): digitaalse meediumide kogumi (*media ensemble*) abil on võimalik säilitada perekonnasidemeid ja olla perekond isegi siis, kui ollakse hajutatud ajas ja ruumis (URIMUSED I–IV).
- Pereliikmete rollid ja vastutused on muutunud – seda näitab vanemate digitaalsete abivahendite, näiteks jälgimisseadmete, kasutuselevõtt. Need tehnoloogiad lisavad traditsioonilistele vanemakohustustele uusi nõudmisi,

võimaldades vanematel täita oma kohustusi isegi lapsest eemal olles. Üha enam oodatakse vanematelt selliste abivahendite kasutamist (**UURIMUSED I, III**).

- Kuigi digitehnoloogiad võivad pereliikmeid kaasata ja jõustada, võivad need samuti muuta olemasolevaid võimudünaamikaid vanemate ja laste vahel. Seda ilmestab jälgimisarakenduste kasutamine, mida vanemad ei pruugi lastega arutada ja mille kasutuspõhjuseid võib lastel olla keeruline mõista. Nii tugevneb vanemate autoriteet veelgi (**UURIMUSED I–III**).
- Digitaalsed tehnoloogiad pakuvad temaatilist raamistikku (*frame of relevance*), mis kujundab perekonda kui figuratsiooni moodustavaid praktikaid. See tehnoloogiline raamistik mõjutab pereliikmete tegevusi ja määratleb seega perekonna tervikuna (st figuratsioonina). Lisaks võib valitsev raamistik suunata perekonda näiteks vanemliku vahendamise või hooliva andmejälgimise (*caring dataveillance*) suunas. Vanemliku jälgimise normaliseerumine (**UURIMUSED I, IV**) tähistab muutust perekonna temaatilises raamistikus ja aitab kaasa tehnoloogia suurenevale rollile nende elus. Üha süvenev meediastumine tuleneb nendest muutustest ning vastupidi – meediastumine laiemalt tingib neid muutusi peredes.
- Perekondade kommunikatiivsed praktikad on samuti muutunud: pered toimivad ühes tehnoloogiate ja vahenditega, mis võimaldavad jälgimist. Seega võib laste internetiturvalisuse vahendamist või nende asukoha jälgimist vaadelda kui kommunikatiivseid praktikaid, mis on saanud paljude perede igapäevaelu lahutamatuks osaks (**UURIMUSED I–IV**).
- Digitaalse vanemluse praktika on rekursiivne, tugevdades ja stabiliseerides süvameediastumise põhilisi suundumusi nagu *kiire innovatsioon, andmes-tumine* jne (**UURIMUSED I–IV**).

2. Millised on süvameediastumise tagajärjed perekonnale kui kommunikatiivsele figuratsioonile?

- Süvameediastumine võib kaasa tuua rohkem võimalusi osalemiseks – see tähendab, et digitehnoloogiad võivad jõustada erinevaid sotsiaalseid kooslusi, sealhulgas perekondi. Näiteks jälgimine pakub vanematele kindlustunnet ja leevendab tarbetuid muresid (**UURIMUSED I, III**). Lisaks võib tehnoloogia võimestada ka lapsi, pakkudes neile suuremat vabadust nii veebis kui ka füüsilises maailmas (**UURIMUSED I, II, IV**).
- *Ühenduvus* toob kaasa kommunikatiivsete figuratsioonide ruumilise laienemise. Lisaks geograafilisele laienemisele (näiteks vanemad ja lapsed saavad perekonda luua üle kogu maailma) võimaldab ühenduvus ka laienemist läbi veebimaailma. See tähendab, et süvameediastumise üks tagajärgi on kommunikatiivsete figuratsioonide ajaline laienemine – näiliselt lakkamatu vanemlus on võimalik eelkõige tänu digitehnoloogiatele.

- Digitehnoloogiad võivad vähendada ühenduvuse sügavust, nõrgestades kommunikatiivsete praktikate siduvat jõudu perekondades. Tehnoloogilised seadmed võivad vähendada igapäevast vahetut suhtlust (**UURIMUSED I–III**).
- *Diferentseerumine* võib kaasa tuua mitmesuguseid vastuolulisi mõjusid. Näiteks kui vanemad püüavad maandada laste internetikasutusega seotud riske, võib see soovimatu tagajärjena takistada laste vabadust iseseisvalt avastada ja kasvada (**UURIMUS IV**).
- Üks süvameediastumise tagajärg on meedia kasutamise valikulisus – see tähendab, et kasutajad saavad valida paljude olemasolevate kasutusvõimaluste vahel. Viisid, kuidas perekonnad digitehnoloogiaid, eelkõige jälgimisseadmeid, kasutavad, on mitmekülgsed (**UURIMUSED I–III**).
- Süvameediastumine toob kaasa surve kohaneda – näiteks oodatakse, et vanemad käiksid kaasas hea vanemluse praktikate ja eriti sotsiaalse jälgimisega (nt asukoha määramine, sotsiaalmeedia kasutuse jälgimine jne; **UURIMUSED I–IV**). Sotsiaalne jälgimine viitab pereelu üha süvenevale meediastumisele.

3. Kuidas haldavad pereliikmed digitehnoloogiatega seotud privaatsust?

- Jälgimine aitab kaasa hooliva andmejälgimise normaliseerumisele – lapsed on jälgimispraktikatega harjunud ega kahtle oma vanemate autoriteedis. Hooliva andmejälgimise normaliseerumine võib seega kaasa tuua lapse jaoks inimestevahelise privaatsuse (*interpersonal privacy*) kadumise normaliseerumise, kuna vanemad võivad kergesti privaatsusega seotud piire ületada, reegleid eirata või neid lastega mitte läbi rääkida (**UURIMUSED I, II**).
- Privaatsuse reguleerimine läbi privaatsusreeglite kehtestamise ja koordineerimise on peredes pidev kommunikatiivne protsess, mängides olulist rolli selles, kuidas lapsed õpivad oma privaatsust teavet haldama (**UURIMUSED I, II**).
- Perede kommunikatiivne konstrueerimine aitab kaasa laiemale privaatsuse mõistmisele. Seega võib inimestevahelise privaatsuse haldamine peredes olla eelduseks laste suhtumisele ja teadmistele institutsionaalsest ja äri- liseist privaatsusest (*institutional and commercial privacy*) (**UURIMUSED I, II**).
- Pereliikmed, eelkõige vanemad, jätavad igapäevaelus nii institutsionaalse kui ka ärilise privaatsuse sageli tähelepanuta (**UURIMUSED I, II**). Lapsevanemad peavad privaatsuseküsimusi (olgu siis inimestevahelisi või ärilisi)

nooremate laste jaoks arusaamatuks (**URIMUS III**), kuigi mõnedel lastel on hästi arenenud arusaam võimalikest privaatsuse rikkumistest (**URIMUS II**).

Minu doktoritöö panus seisneb perekondade kommunikatiivse konstrueerimise põhjalikus uurimises jälgimistehnoloogiate vaatenurgast. Ühtlasi aitab doktoritöö mõista perekondade seotust süvameediastumise suundumustega ning nende suundumuste mõju perekondade igapäevaelule.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Platforming Families – tracing digital transformations in everyday life across generations (01.10.2022–30.09.2025), Estonian Research Council (no. SSVU H22394)
Youth Skills (01.01.2020–31.12.2023), Horizon 2020 (no. MSVUH20005R)
CO:RE – Children Online: Research and Evidence (01.01.2020–31.03.2023), Horizon 2020 (no. 871018)
EU Kids Online Survey in Estonia (01.02.2018–28.02.2019), Eesti Interneti SA (no. SSVUH18087), Ministry of Justice (no. SSVUH18107), Ministry of Social Affairs (no. SSVUH18379), Ministry of Education and Research (no. NSVUH18114)

Selected publications:

Siibak, A., Napp, M., Heinmäe, E., Silde, A., Sindi, I., & Sisask, M. (2023). Vaimset heaolu vormiv digitehnoloogiate kasutus pere igapäevaelus [The use of digital technologies shaping mental well-being in the everyday life of families]. M. Sisask, K. Konstabel, D. Kutsar, H. Sooväli-Sepping, K. Tiidenberg, K. Pärna (Eds.), *Eesti inimarengu aruanne 2023. Vaimne tervis ja heaolu [The Estonian Human Development Report 2023. Mental health and well-being]* (pp. 272–284). Tallinn: Eesti Koostöö Kogu, <https://inimareng.ee/et/eesti-inimarengu-aruanne-2023/>

- Kalmus, V., Sukk, M., & Soo, K. (2022). Towards more active parenting: Trends in parental mediation of children's internet use in European countries. *Children & Society*, 36(5), 1026–1042. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12553>
- Sukk, M. (2022). Children's voices in research: Q methodology as a facilitator of children's participation. S. Kotilainen (Ed.), *Methods in practice: Studying children and youth online* (pp. 28–32). Hamburg: Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung; Hans-Bredow-Institut (HBI); CO:RE – Children Online: Research and Evidence, <https://doi.org/10.21241/ssoar.83031>
- Sukk, M., & Siibak, A. (2022). “My mom just wants to know where I am”: Estonian pre-teens' perspectives on intimate surveillance by parents. *Journal of Children and Media*, 16(3), 424–440. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2021.2014646>
- Sukk, M., & Siibak, A. (2021). Caring dataveillance and the construction of “good parenting”: Estonian parents' and pre-teens' reflections on the use of tracking technologies. *Communications*, 46(3), 446–467. <https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2021-0045>

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Rahvusvahelise projekti EU Kids Online raames laste internetikasutuse Eesti uuringu elluviimine (01.02.2018–28.02.2019), Eesti Interneti SA (nr SSVUH 18087), Justiitsministeerium (nr SSVUH18107), Sotsiaalministeerium (nr SSVUH18379), Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium (nr NSVUH18114)

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