

MARIA MURUMAA-MENGEL

Managing Imagined Audiences Online:
Audience Awareness as a Part
of Social Media Literacies



DISSERTATIONES DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
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of Social Media Literacies



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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This dissertation is based on the following five original publications, which are listed in chronological order and will be referred to by Roman numerals.

- I **Murumaa, M., & Siibak, A.** (2012). The imagined audience on Facebook: Analysis of Estonian teen sketches about typical Facebook users. *First Monday*, 17(2). Retrieved from: <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3712/3147>
- II Siibak, A., & **Murumaa-Mengel, M.** (2013). Exploring the potential of creative research for the study of imagined audiences: A case study of Estonian students' sketches on typical Facebook users. In G. Patriarche, H. Bilandzic, J. Linaa Jensen, J. Jurišić (Eds.). *Audience research methodologies: Between innovation and consolidation* (pp.127–143). London: Routledge.
- III **Murumaa-Mengel, M.**, (2015). Drawing the threat: A study on perceptions of the online pervert among Estonian high school students. *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 23(1), 1–18. Retrieved from: <http://you.sagepub.com/content/23/1/1.full.pdf+html>
- IV **Murumaa-Mengel, M., & Siibak, A.** (2014). Roles of a researcher: Reflections after doing a case-study with youth on a sensitive topic. In L. Kramp, N. Carpentier, A. Hepp, I. Tomanic-Trivundza, H. Nieminen, R. Kunelius, T. Olsson, E. Sundin & R. Kilborn (Eds.). *Media practice and everyday agency in Europe* (pp. 249–259). Bremen: edition lumière. Retrieved from: http://www.researchingcommunication.eu/book9chapters/C20_Murumaaetal1314.pdf
- V **Murumaa-Mengel, M., & Siibak, A.** (2014). Teachers as nightmare readers: Estonian high-school teachers' experiences and opinions about student-teacher interaction on Facebook. *International Review of Information Ethics: The Digital Future of Education*, (21). Retrieved from: <http://www.i-r-i-e.net/inhalt/021/IRIE-021-Mengel-Siibak.pdf>

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The author's contribution to the articles is as follows:

- Study I:** “The imagined audience on Facebook: Analysis of Estonian teen sketches about typical Facebook users”: the study was designed and conducted by the author. The author is partly responsible for the analysis and discussion.
- Study II:** “Exploring the potential of creative research for the study of imagined audiences: A case study of Estonian students’ sketches on typical Facebook users”: the author was partially involved in writing the theoretical and discussion parts and predominantly responsible for the data analysis.
- Study III:** “Drawing the threat: A study on perceptions of the online pervert among Estonian high school students”: the study was initiated and designed fully by the author. The study was conducted and analysed by the author and the author is fully responsible for the manuscript.
- Study IV:** “Roles of a researcher: Reflections after doing a case-study with youth on a sensitive topic”: the role of the author of this thesis was predominant in the article, especially in analysis of specific roles, as the author was also the one designing the study and collecting data.
- Study V:** “Teachers as nightmare readers: Estonian high-school teachers’ experiences and opinions about student-teacher interaction on Facebook”: the author was partly responsible for all aspects of the conceptualization and writing of this article, more dominantly in the analysis part.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Internet culture is a difficult one – the jokes are often borderline, extreme trolling (deliberately starting arguments or provoking readers into an emotional response) is seen as entertainment (Laineste, 2013) and “others” often seem to be dehumanized by the fact that they are behind the screen. Recently, we have seen the rise of problematic cases that have sprouted from situations where people have misjudged the size and expectations of their online audience. Cases of misjudgement of audiences are abundant by now, often ending in massive online public shaming, and the people associated with such incidents have become notorious. Stacy Snyder¹, Lindsey Stone², Justine Sacco³ and many others have become cautionary tales of the power of social media and its audiences (see e.g. Ronson, 2015; Mayer-Shönberger, 2009) and have shown us how audiences are quick to equate a person with the worst thing that person ever did (Ronson, 2016). In these social media horror stories, we often notice the clash of intended imagined reception and actualized unexpected reaction.

Estonia has proved to be a great environment for internet studies in general and for my research as well, as it has earned recognition in the world for its diverse and widely used electronic public services in the government and private sector and relatively high Internet usage rates. Almost 90 per cent of Estonians use the internet regularly (Information technology..., 2016), and nearly 100 per cent of the younger age groups are online and using social network sites (Vihalemm & Kõuts, 2017; Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014).

Social media and social network sites (SNS) are defined here as web-based services that allow people to present themselves through a uniquely identifiable (semi-)public profile and connect with other users to consume, produce, and interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site (Ellison & boyd, 2013). In the age of SNS, “eavesdropping” seems to be the new norm, as different internet sites offer glimpses or thorough overviews of others’ lives. In addition to general information, people often also share intimate details with those whom they imagine to be following them. These “imagined others” are perceived to be similar to ourselves and therefore closer to an “ideal reader”, while nightmare audiences, as internet researchers danah

¹ Snyder was a teacher in training when she posted a photo on her MySpace page that showed her at a party wearing a pirate hat and drinking from a plastic cup with the caption “Drunken Pirate.” After her supervisor discovered the page, she was denied her teaching degree (Rosen, 2010).

² Stone posted a photo on her Facebook page that showed her joking around at a war memorial. A sign at a cemetery in the US asked for silence, and Stone pretended to shout for the camera, which was part of a running inside joke for her and her friend. After the post went viral, she was fired from her job and harassed online (Ronson, 2016)

³ Sacco tweeted, “Going to Africa. Hope I don’t get AIDS. Just Kidding. I’m white!”, as a joke during a plane trip, intending the tweet to mock American ignorance of South Africa. She, too, lost her job and was a victim to a large online shaming campaign (Ronson, 2015).

boyd and Alice Marwick (2011) have called them usually tend to consist of people who differ from us and are opposite to us. Consequently, the ideal audience is more welcome to “eavesdrop” and the nightmare readers are not welcomed, whether the user is aware of such members of their networks or unaware of their presence.

The aim of this thesis is to explore further how people perceive and construct their imagined audiences on social media and to elaborate upon social media literacies that are connected with audience awareness. Furthermore, I aim to contribute to the general academic discussion about methodological approaches and researcher’s stance when making use of qualitative creative research methods.

My thesis focuses on SNS users’ perceptions of two, often opposing audience types: the imagined audience in general (often inclined to ideal readers) and “unwanted”, “nightmare” members of this audience in particular. I am going to explore in this thesis how these imagined audiences are perceived by two opposite, but complementary actors – the young (high school students) (**Study I and Study III**) and the educators (**Study V**) whom the young often mention as a group they consider to be nightmare readers (Marwick & boyd, 2011). From my research, I hope to understand more clearly what characterizes the audience awareness component of digital literacies.

When talking about literacies, turning to these two agents seems the logical and purposeful way of approaching the subject, as these two groups can potentially give information about the formal and informal part of digital literacies. The children and young adults of today are attracting a great deal of academic and popular interest (Robards, 2013) as they are at the forefront of new practices and cultural shifts. It is frequently argued that young people are the first to adopt technological innovations and that, therefore, any problems they notice or perceive could be indicators of emergent problems in society at large (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011; Miles, 2003). Thus, we as researchers have an obligation to represent them fairly. Paradoxically, at the same time, it has been suggested that we as a society do not have a culture of listening to younger people – the “not yet’s” are perceived vulnerable because of their physical weakness and their lack of knowledge and experience (Lansdown, 1994; Richards & Morrow, 1996; Casas, Gonzalez & Navarro, 2014). My thesis is rooted in the social constructivism paradigm, focusing mainly on young people’s perceptions and experiences from SNS, because I believe it is important to make sense of young people’s lifeworlds, including the people that shape these worlds.

I am also including the opinions and experiences of teachers and members of older generations into my research in order to get a broader overview of the topic. Older adults are increasingly present on SNS (Nef *et al.*, 2013; Duggan *et al.*, 2015), but in contrast to the members of the present-day young generation, have more reference points from the past, perceiving the world as it used to be and comparing the contemporary world to the historical one (Siibak & Vittadini, 2012). Teachers are historically seen as mentors and role models for

the youth (Miller, 2011), thus their “reasoning about teacher jurisdiction in student social networking behaviours would help to clarify ‘expert’ perspectives” (Foulger *et al.*, 2009: 18). Teachers’ responsibility is threefold in the domain of internet – first, they have an obligation to develop their students’ digital skills and develop a broad list of literacies in their students. Secondly, it is often argued that student posts that could be considered bullying or which threaten public safety (e.g. school shootings) are not “detected or solved without adult presence *within* [italics in the original] the medium” (Asterhan *et al.*, 2013: 3), and that adult is in many cases the teacher. Thirdly, teachers are expected to behave like educators at all times (Kist, 2008).

Audience perception is undoubtedly a complex process with many different influencing factors, but digital literacies are certainly a part of it. Digital literacies include a broad set of skills and knowledge, of which social media literacies (Livingstone, 2014; Rheingold, 2010) are the most relevant for this work. Howard Rheingold speaks of five literacies – attention, participation, collaboration, network awareness and critical consumption (Rheingold, 2010: 16). I will take a closer look at and develop further the idea of the network awareness literacies, more specifically the audience awareness aspect. It is noticeable that the focus in thinking about digital literacies is often on the technical skills and the apprehension of the structure of the internet. Rheingold (2010), too, has primarily emphasized the importance of understanding the nature and structure of networks. The social side of the network awareness is difficult to study and thus has not gained equal depth in academic thought. By entwining approaches from media and communication studies (mostly audience research) and educational studies, I will try to develop the theoretical concept of network awareness – especially its social aspects – and see how they could be applied in practice.

This thesis is based on five articles, two of which are methodological (**Study II** and **Study IV**) and three of which are empirical (**Study I**, **Study III** and **Study V**). Most of the articles are co-authored with professor Andra Siibak, except for **Study III**, which was solely designed and written by me. The first study in my list of publications focused on how young people make sense of SNS audiences (**Study I**, “The imagined audience on Facebook: Analysis of Estonian teen sketches about typical Facebook users”), which was then followed by a study that took a closer look at young people’s perception of online perverts, a group of nightmare readers they had experienced to exist among the SNS audience (**Study III**, “Drawing the threat: A study on perceptions of the online pervert among Estonian high school students”). My last empirical study provides a slightly different view on the theme of SNS audiences – Estonian teachers, who were also perceived to belong to the nightmare readers’ category by the youth participants in **Study I**, were asked to share their perceptions about the imagined SNS audiences, as well as their experiences about belonging to the imagined audience on SNS (**Study V**, “Teachers as nightmare readers: Estonian high-school teachers’ experiences and opinions about student-teacher interaction on Facebook”). Some data was collected using more traditional research

methods like focus groups (**Study V**), whereas in other studies I made use of more innovative and playful approaches known as creative research methods (**Study I, Study III**). In the methodological articles I dealt with the use of creative research methods (**Study II**, “Exploring the potential of creative research for the study of imagined audiences: A case study of Estonian students’ sketches on the typical Facebook users”) and the roles of a researcher (**Study IV**, “Roles of a researcher: Reflections after doing a case-study with youth on a sensitive topic”).

The introductory cover article is structured as follows: the first part gives an overview of relevant theoretical concepts – structure and agency in online communication, active audiences and digital and social media literacies; aspects of specific Estonian context are also introduced. The second section describes the methodological part of the studies but in addition, I discuss the empowerment of participants via the use of creative research methods and the reflexivity of the researcher. In the third section, I present the main results of my three empirical studies and in the following “Discussion” part, I will examine possible explanations for the various aspects and factors of audiences on SNS. The cover article ends with a conclusion and a supplementary summary in Estonian.

2. SETTING THE PROBLEM

This thesis is built on and features several contradictions and dichotomies – for example, real/virtual, young/old, public/private, control/liberation, risk/opportunity etc. When we take a closer look at these concepts, we notice that they are often dynamic aspects of a duality, rather than parts of mutually exclusive dualism (Giddens, 1984). We should, of course, keep in mind that such labels and concepts are socially constructed by nature, drawing attention to some aspects and forming patterns that human minds seek everywhere. Nevertheless, when studying people's perceptions which often are generalised patterns and social constructs, such an approach is fitting.

In order to clarify my position, I must note that although the first wave of internet studies separated and opposed the real and virtual (e.g. Turkle, 1995; Walther, 1996) and public discussions often still feature this opposition, I will try to construct the online world and online self as not the opposite of real, separated and independently existing. Rather, I view the two as intertwined, affecting each other, making up an augmented reality (Jurgenson, 2012) and augmented self. For example, a teacher may have certain preconceptions towards a sleepy student in class who posted on Facebook at 4 a.m. on a previous night; or a student may be biased towards a particular predisposition after seeing a teacher on the dating app Tinder.

To give another example, the contradiction of control/liberation and public/private is evident in a recent case where an Estonian school girl made a critical comment on Twitter about a school play and was punished harshly for it by her teachers and principal (Laks, 2016). (Semi-)publicly voicing one's opinion on social media is bound up in an individual's right and freedom to express themselves, to construct and choose their own messages, media and intended audiences. Messages that could be considered "in poor taste" by certain members of the audience are nothing extraordinary – sarcasm, irony and competition for reactions are a major part of online communication and a game often revolves around making the wittiest remark (Laineste, 2013). But is it ethical for a teacher to punish a student for using their voice in an online setting, to try to censor their words, even to judge the student based on their online presence? What is considered rude in one context (the school's reputation) and could end with harsh sanctions might well be praised in another (developing theatrical literacies) and earn positive recognition (Rooste, 2016). As we see, risks and opportunities go hand in hand and audience awareness as a complex skill is at play here.

I will start disentangling these dualities (that are often presented as oppositions) from the broader question of structure-agency balance (Giddens, 1984) in the field of online audiences; then move on to concepts of passive traditional and active new media audiences; and thirdly, present digital and social media literacies and the opportunities and risks tied to them. The chapter will end with a short introduction to some relevant aspects of Estonian context that have undoubtedly shaped the results of my studies.

2.1. Structure and agency of online audiences

Anthony Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration, which binds structure and agency together through rules, resources, social practices and systems, is fitting for this thesis because it aligns with my underlying notion that societies in which subjects live and act are socially constructed and given meaning to (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In Giddens's structuration theory, structure does not have primacy over actions and vice versa, as it has been, for example, in functionalist or structuralist and phenomenological thought. "In structuration, agency and structure are separate only in terms of an analytical divide but are closer than the two-sided coin metaphor" (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014: 1894).

In structuration theory, agency, the "reflexive form of knowledgeability" of people (Giddens, 1984: 3), which has been downplayed historically, should be given equal importance in treating and studying social phenomena. Such agency of (competent) actors is essentially people's free will and capability of independent choices that are continuously mirrored in and by their unconscious motives, discursive and practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984). When we view the subject of online audiences using the frame of structure and agency, a tilt towards the agency in the popular and academic philosophical discussions can be noticed – disclosing information and engaging in communication are often perceived to be a question about individual choice and responsibility (Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2015). Participation implies action on many levels – to sign up, read up, listen up, speak up etc., but mostly to continuously make sense of the structure and practice that "reflexive form of knowledgeability" that Giddens spoke of. In online settings, reflexive form of knowledgeability can be difficult to practice, as people lack information about their audience and thus "it is often difficult to determine how to behave, let alone to make adjustments based on assessing reactions" (boyd, 2008: 36).

Social structure is viewed as "rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction" (Giddens, 1984: xxxi). Social norms and practices, the more or less institutional organization of social life, material and virtual pathways and possibilities can all be viewed as a part of a structure which reproduces the social systems. Macro-level constructs like technologies and the structure of social media dictate some possibilities for sharing information (e.g. technical aspects and netiquette), and is both constraining and enabling, as Giddens (1984) wrote about structures in general. For example, certain SNSs can limit the length of texts that are being shared, thus amplifying the embracement of short genres and shorthand of communication. Some SNSs have made it possible to tag photos of friends but people can decide not to use such options, for instance, fearing the loss of control over one's accepted online presence. A teacher may disable the photo tagging option on Facebook because of perceived netiquette, the code of conduct for educators and the risk that others' posts pose on their reputation management. Of course, others can perceive and reproduce these aspects of the social structure completely differently, even deliberately

start a counter-practice and thus enable change in the structure. Established ways of doing things can be changed when “people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently” (Gauntlett, 2008: 102). It is worth emphasizing that structures are dual by nature, consisting of “both the medium of interaction and its outcome” (McPhee, Poole & Iverson, 2014: 76).

At the heart of this thesis is the fact that social media has structurally led to “context collapse” (boyd, 2008; Marwick & boyd, 2011), where a great variety of people with different sociodemographic backgrounds, motivations, perceptions of social norms, etc. are brought together. The different contexts that surrounded communication previously, in pre-internet times, have collapsed on SNS (Marwick & boyd, 2011) and brought together total strangers, friends, colleagues, lovers, vindictive ex-partners, potential employers, clients, political activists, commercial brands, students, children, grandparents, etc. (more on ideal and nightmare readers in chapter 2.2.1). Hence, the user of an SNS like Facebook needs to “contend with groups of people they do not normally bring together” (Marwick & boyd, 2011: 122). Furthermore, besides the above-mentioned “context collapse”, social media users have to come to terms with the norm of *omnicon*, i.e. the state of continuous mutual surveillance where every user acts both as agent and subject (Linaa Jensen, 2010; Rosen, 2004). The educators watch the young, and vice versa; parents keep an eye on their kids, but also their teachers (and here, too, the surveillance is often mutual). When a teacher or a student posts content on SNS, the norms of the group that is being imagined as the audience are reconstructed. In the context of collapse of SNSs, many different actors and groups are present, and they often react sharply to the breach of the collective understanding of “normal behaviour” (Gauntlett, 2002). The potential for conflict is a question of social media literacies – more specifically network awareness (Rheingold, 2010), or the reflexive form of knowledgeability (Giddens, 1984). This topic will be explored further in chapter 2.3.

To sum up, in structuration “a system is maintained through the use or application of structures ..., agency is characterized by an innate ability to imagine different outcomes” (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014: 1894). One of the main ideas of structuration theory is that “the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction” (Giddens, 1984: 19). So, for example, the online spaces and people’s actions in them are modifying the existing norms and contributing to reproducing them at the same time (Siibak, 2009a; Shih, 2011). For example, Facebook has in many cases broadened the context where teacher-student interaction and relationships take place and thus modified the accepted communication repertoires; at the same time, teachers often reproduce and represent the professional power hierarchy on SNS as an extended classroom.

According to Giddens, agency also includes unintentional acts of a person, it “refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place” (Giddens, 1984: 9). Structural context collapse and the triumph of the many-to-many, mass-self communication model

(Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2009) has amplified the unintended consequences of agency. In the light of structuration theory, social media reinforces and guides agents by societal value structures such as norms of social groups that govern our behaviour (Livingstone, 2008), while independent choices, forms of participation and meaning-making of the agents actively act as means for system reproduction or rearrangement.

2.2. Audience transformations: from receivers to producers

For a long time, audience was seen as a rather passive entity in the communicative sender-receiver act, especially in the previously prevalent linear one-directional communication mass media (McQuail, 2013). It is important to note that audience research was initiated by the senders, media industry and its clients, and thus of service to them (McQuail, 2013: 10). Audience was often thought of as an unidentifiable mass (Livingstone, 2005) who cannot respond back to the broadcaster (Marwick & boyd, 2011); one message could reach many, producing a uniform effect (McQuail, 2013). Then, step by step, audience theory began to include various aspects of communication – e.g. the social structure of audiences, mediators, self-determination, technological innovations and diversity in many senses (McQuail, 2013).

Many-to-many communication models or the triumph of mass self-communication (Castells, 2009) has “activated” the receivers to a greater degree. With the rise of electronic media, audiences can (but do not have to) create, access, choose, discuss and record vast amounts of information. Being an audience or the “audiencehood” is often more central to audience studies than the communication and (both traditional and user-generated) content itself (McQuail, 2013) and the overall communicative mode is “conversation”, where the strict separation of sender and receiver is blurred (Schmidt, 2014).

Although some (e.g. Severin & Tankard, 1992) have theorized the existence of an “objective meaning” of a message, this thesis is based on an approach by which meaningful messages are constructed, carrying denotative and connotative meanings that are encoded in the message by the sender and decoded by the receiver in many different, desirable and unexpected ways (Hall, 1980/2008). In online settings, “the social cues that would normally inform the recipient(s) about the intentions of the sender are missing and thus the meanings of a statement multiply, escaping the control of the author” (Laineste, 2013: 30). SNS have brought with them social convergence, the phenomenon where people are left to “handle disparate audiences simultaneously without a social script” (boyd, 2008: 18). The many-to-many communication model has broadened the audiences, parallel and (often) superficial activities common to multitasking make people switch continuously from one role to another – “audiences and publics, producers and producers, citizens and consumers are

converging and diverging in parallel with the media texts and technologies with which they engage” (Livingstone & Das, 2013: 3).

Of course, not all members of audiences use their agency to the fullest, with the majority choosing or forced to be passive “lurkers”, and relatively few people are taking advantage of these new engagement possibilities (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008). But in essence, previously passive observer-audiences as a concept have transformed into active and creative participants (Livingstone, 2003), so “produser” is a central concept of online audiences, denoting a member of an audience who is simultaneously a producer and user of information (Bruns, 2008). Such members can be characterized by their potential to (re)create and discuss content; access vast amounts of information; reform the structures they occupy; form numerous connections with other producers; and communicate with various audiences.

2.2.1. Social media audiences: imagined and actual, ideal and nightmare

When a person takes the role of a produser, they need to imagine an audience, as audience is always imagined in every communicative act (Marwick & boyd, 2011). The notion of imagined audience as a term for mental conceptualizations of the people we are in communication with has been in use already for over a century, but it has more importance than ever in the online setting (Litt, 2012). With decreasing physical face-to-face communication, we are often left to imagine the people and their reactions receiving our messages. “The less an actual audience is visible or known, the more individuals become dependent on their imagination” (Litt, 2012: 331) and social media with its mediated publics (boyd, 2007) or personal publics (Schmidt, 2014) often offers limited cues on the size and heterogeneity of our audience.

“Much of what is said goes unheard” on the internet (Hoechsmann, 2008: 61), but the imagined audiences in people’s minds imply the “belief that others are thinking about and judging you at all times” (Cingel & Krcmar, 2014). In the constant observation performance on social media, none of the users ever knows who is watching them at any given time and often has to imagine the recipients of their posts. Research on social media – e.g. SNS (Siibak, 2009a; Siibak, 2009b; boyd, 2006, boyd, 2014), dating sites and apps (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Whitty, 2008; James, 2015), blogs (Hodkinson & Lincoln, 2008; Stefanone & Jang, 2007) and micro–blogging sites (Marwick & boyd, 2011) – suggests that users are very attentive to audience and often “take cues from the social environment to imagine the community” (boyd, 2007: 131). This imagined community more often than not differs from the actual audience, as social media environments host a great variety of individuals who are perfect recipients of our messages and information, as they share our values and have the right interpretative lens (boyd, 2010; boyd, 2014), but some are just the opposite of that.

Ideal audiences are often modelled in our heads based on ourselves and those close to us. When information is shared online, it is often posted for members of the audience who are the “mirror image of the user” (Marwick & boyd, 2011: 120). Therefore, rather than constructing an imagined audience of the site as a whole, users are often focused on addressing specific members of their own friend lists. In other words, users end up creating an “ideal audience” (Marwick & boyd, 2011) as viewers and readers of their profile (see **Study I**). This ideal audience, which is kept in mind when posting information, can be just a specific person, turning all others into a more moderate form of nightmare readers. When people’s friend lists consist of hundreds of people, it is easy to forget the majority of the audience, as “a cognitive limit may dampen the number of people that one can attend simultaneously” (Litt, 2012: 332).

Nightmare readers (**Study III** and **Study V**) are the opposites of ideal readers (Marwick & boyd, 2011), as such members of the social media audience usually represent different spheres of life or have some control over a person: parents, partners, bosses, enemies, etc. who might be included in the SNS friend list but might not be seen as the real target audience of the posts. For young people, who are a focal point of my studies, immediate authority figures usually exercise judicial and sociocultural restrictions – they include parents, teachers and the police, and in some contexts, religious officials as well (boyd, 2014). “What makes this especially tricky for teens is that people who hold power over them often believe that they have the right to look, judge, and share, even when their interpretations may be constructed wholly out of context” (boyd, 2014: 50). In other words, young people are predominantly more concerned about certain social media user types viewing their posts and profiles, not so much that complete strangers or abstract actors like corporations and governments will do so. Teachers are also an integral part of this thesis (**Study V**), as they are often perceived as nightmare readers by young people. Such a “nightmare” relationship, however, can be turned around as well, because “uprightness of character” (Lumpkin, 2008: 46) is expected of teachers even when they are off-duty (Foulger *et al.*, 2009). While many academic studies suggest that SNSs provide an open and supportive environment for teacher-student interaction (e.g. Hershkovitz & Forkosh-Baruch, 2013; Akiti, 2012; Greenhow, Robelia & Hughes, 2009), others (e.g. Kist, 2008; Madge *et al.*, 2009; Asterhan & Rosenberg, 2015) have drawn attention to the negative aspects as well, for example that teachers may be afraid of objectionable student comments or blog posts and are therefore deciding against using such platforms.

Teachers, parents and the police all have some “jurisdiction” over young people and are not normally considered malicious actors by the public. The opposite of such built-in conflicts is the wide media coverage of the online predators or the online perverts, as they are often called in Estonian media (Birkan, 2009; Rohtla, 2013; Murumaa-Mengel, 2016). The mainstream media is usually the most vocal and concerned, even stirring up panic about online predators (for a more thorough overview, see **Study III**). While some researchers are convinced that the “anonymous nature of the Internet allows

offenders to masquerade as children in cyberspace to gain the confidence and trust of their victims” (Choo, 2009: x), others (boyd & Marwick, 2009; Wolak *et al.*, 2008) stress that the online pervert is not usually a separate breed of highly skilled child molester who uses trickery and violence to assault children, but point out that most internet-initiated sex crimes involve adult men who use the internet to meet and seduce underage adolescents into sexual encounters, and in the majority of the cases, victims are aware they are conversing online with adults.

Related to this aspect, we are not necessarily always talking about nightmare audiences (“the perverts will look at your half-naked pictures and track you down”), as the contact is often mutually agreed upon. Rather we are talking about assessing the risks, managing content and being aware of contexts (“do you understand what you are agreeing to?”). Social media often makes the users disregard the notion of contextual integrity, a concept developed by Helen Nissenbaum (2004), who argues that all arenas of life are governed by norms of information flow and all everyday actions take place in the context of place, conventions, politics and cultural expectations. First, computer-mediated communication can make the somewhat anonymous other “feel less human”. Second, being aware of the heterogeneous nature of audiences on SNS is often a matter of digital literacies, social media literacies, in particular. Some people are more empowered to apply informational self-determination and have greater agency, but others can be left behind due to the lack of skills or knowledge.

2.3. Social media literacies

There are various and often overlapping concepts used when talking about people’s ability to apply informational self-determination in online settings and participatory cultures (Jenkins *et al.*, 2009) in a meaningful way – media literacies, new media literacies, digital literacies, information literacies, computer literacies, network literacies, etc. (Bawden, 2001; Buckingham, 2007; Jenkins *et al.*, 2009; Vanwynsberghe, Boudry & Verdegem, 2011; Summey, 2013; Vinter, 2013). The plural version of the term seems more fitting as the skills and knowledge are highly diverse (Livingstone, 2004; Kalmus *et al.*, 2009). Indeed, all these literacies are increasingly intertwined in online settings, often pointing to similar aspects that include a variety of cognitive, motor, sociological, and emotional skills (Eshet-Alkalai, 2005; Selwyn, 2004). To generalise, four main areas of digital skills and knowledge are usually emphasized (e.g. Karpati, 2011; Duffy & Bruns, 2006; Buckingham, 2007; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Vanwynsberghe & Verdegem, 2013):

- access and usage
- critical analysis and evaluation
- participation and collaboration
- creation and production

Digital literacies often follow a linear logic, a ladder of opportunities, as Sonia Livingstone and Ellen Helsper (2007) noticed when studying the young: the first step is usually information seeking, which includes the skills and competencies needed to access and locate content, using the available technologies and associated software, which is tightly connected with the understanding of content, knowledge of production processes, and an ability to critique media (Buckingham, 2007). The linear logic of ladder of opportunities then includes activities tied to entertainment and communication (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007), and from there, often builds up to users called “all-rounders” with a diverse range of interactive and creative uses (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). These “all-rounders” are able to use the media to produce and communicate one’s own messages, whether for purposes of self-expression or in order to influence or interact with others (Buckingham, 2007). EU Kids Online network (2014) found that the ladder of opportunities is still too steep with the majority of youth not reaching the level of creative, collaborative or civic activities online. Similarly, for instance, the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) test in Estonia has shown that the majority of adults can use ICTs only in limited ways (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt *et al.*, 2015). Typically people stay on the second rung (entertainment and communication) and social media is especially relevant there.

Thus, I will focus on a more specific and relevant subset of digital skills, what has been termed social media literacies (Rheingold, 2010; Vanwynsberghe, Boudry & Verdegem, 2011; Livingstone, 2014). Although efforts have been made (Vanwynsberghe, Boudry & Verdegem, 2011) to operationalize the components of social media literacies, it must be noted that “aspects of pleasure, sensuality and irrationality that are arguably central to most people’s experience of media, and of culture more broadly” (Buckingham, 2007: 45) shape people’s SNS usage too. According to Sonia Livingstone (2014: 3), social media literacies include two levels – more specific skills and knowledge, such as “how SNSs encode user privacy or safety, how they represent friends as ‘contacts’ and affiliation through ‘likes’, and how they embed advertising and sponsorship”, but also how social media encodes social interactions as text and therefore the literacies are about social interaction on a more general level. Indeed, many scholars have conceptualized new media and social media literacies as more general social skills (Jenkins *et al.*, 2009; Rheingold, 2012), adding that there is no direct or universal route to being literate or competent, “each pathway is unique” (Casey, 2013: 57). Such “conceptual vagueness” (Vanwynsberghe, Boudry & Verdegem, 2011: 11) of social media literacies cannot be entirely surmounted and a certain level of abstractness has to remain, to fit with the fluid online landscape, experiences and practices. Social media is versatile and used for a vast number of reasons – finding and sharing information; maintaining, managing and building relationships and own identity/communities, participating on many levels and modes, etc. (Siibak & Suder, 2013; Marwick, Murgia-Diaz & Palfrey, 2010; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; boyd, 2008; Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2008; Larsen, 2007).

In order to do all that, social media literacies are needed. These literacies can be categorized in many ways, for example into (Vanwynsberghe, Boudry & Verdegem, 2011):

1. access to social media applications
2. measurable objective competences (e.g. knowledge and skills, like what can be done with social media applications and what are the terms and concepts in use, why and how do they operate the way they do, etc.)
3. indirectly measurable subjective competences (e.g. attitudes and self-efficacy, like belief in ease of use, the ability to use applications, enjoyment of activity, etc.)
4. social media use (frequency, intensity, place of use, etc.).

Hadewijch Vanwynsberghe, Elke Boudry and Pieter Verdegem (2011; also Vanwynsberghe & Verdegem, 2013) include audiences in their thorough analysis of social media literacies only briefly and mainly in connection with production – in the context of plagiarism, consumerism and knowing who is the audience of sent messages. In my opinion, people as audiences deserve a longer look in the context of social media literacies, to understand how messages are being encoded and decoded.

Howard Rheingold (2010: 16) has defined social media literacies into five broad sets: attention, participation, collaboration, network awareness and critical consumption. He sees them all as not necessarily linear (differing from the ladder model) and interconnected, with **attention** as fundamental to all others – to be aware, present and mindful, knowing when to be alert and vigilant and when to block out distractions. Similarly to Rheingold's (2010) mindful deployment of attention, in Giddens' (1984) structuration theory the "reflexive form of knowledgeability" is a core concept for the agency of people.

The second aspect of social media literacies is **participation**, which gives people a sense of being in the world (Rheingold, 2010) and is essential to becoming an active producer (Livingstone, 2003; Bruns, 2009). Participation literacy should include understanding the rhetorics of participation – knowing how to communicate their opinions in a productive manner (Rheingold, 2010). It, too, is a broad set of social media literacies, with overlaps in all other aspects, as Jan-Hinrik Schmidt (2014: 7) has put it: "implicit knowledge about shared routines and expectations becomes a condition of inclusion or exclusion in the "community of practice" ..., as well as of participating in particular subcultures."

The third set of social media literacies, **collaboration** stems from the previous one – "using the technologies and techniques of attention and participation allows people to work together" (Rheingold, 2010: 20). **Critical consumption** literacy (or, as Rheingold has alternatively called it, "crap detection") is the ability to question the authority and motivations of the source and figure out who and what is trustworthy online.

Network awareness is most important for this work, as I will develop further the ideas of Rheingold, who has defined network awareness primarily

through understanding the nature of technological networks and their content. Rheingold (2010) turns his main attention to the structure of the internet, to the knowledge about how networks work and who is in control. Models of literacies often revolve around the technical and access or the production and participation aspects (e.g. Jenkins *et al.*, 2009) and less about being an audience, specific audience management skills and the comprehension of nuances in reception. Buckingham (2007: 48) says that “literacy also involves an awareness of one’s own position as an audience (reader or user)” but he seems to focus mostly on how media are targeted on audiences and the comprehension of different audiences. In this thesis I will explore how perceptions of online audiences, self as audience, and audience management strategies – a part of audience awareness literacies – link to the network awareness literacies.

2.3.1. Risks from insufficient social media literacies

As noted in the previous chapters, social media literacies include far more than the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the public and private in online settings. Nevertheless, in the context of online audiences, issues of privacy and publicness are often at the centre of discussions (also in my **Study I** and **Study V**). Various thinkers and scholars (e.g., Gross, 1967; Miller 1971; Bennett, 1992; Post, 2001) have argued that it is not possible to reach a clear consensual agreement on what exactly privacy means because the concept of privacy is too complex and controversial. Indeed, there are many different aspects to privacy that make up unique kaleidoscopic patterns of contexts, actors, relationships, messages, locations and time, while they are always viewed through the filter of social norms and values.

Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, once said that the era of privacy is over and that only people who have something to hide worry about the lack of privacy (Kirkpatrick, 2010). I join scholars from Alan Westin (1967) to Daniel J. Solove (2002; 2007), among others, who say that privacy is not about secrecy; it is about control – personal control over one’s information. Socially mediated publicness (Baym & boyd, 2012) differs from classic publicness as the data is permanent, searchable, replicable and available to the invisible audience (boyd, 2007) and control over one’s information is immensely harder to obtain. Schmidt (2014: 4) uses the term “personal public” to signify the new mediated communicative space that enables the emergence of a new type of publicness.

Agency is increasingly difficult to exercise in today’s public-by-design and uninformed click-consent online environments, “with so many individuals connected in the same social networking sphere, groups of people who rarely crossed paths before now have the opportunity to peer into each other’s lives” (Akita, 2012: 123). These onlookers are invisible in social media, so users cannot grasp their real size (Tufekci, 2008). As a rule, people can only imagine a limited potential audience (Litt & Hargittai, 2016a; Siibak & Murumaa, 2011) and never all of the interested parties; hence members of the audience to whom the message is not intended for specifically are forgotten. In addition, people

share the illusion of anonymity that appears in online environments – “no one knows me, no one cares, and no one is focusing on me” (Abril, 2007), so digital literacies might not be considered a necessity.

There is no consensus regarding what online risks consist of (Ponte, Simões & Jorge, 2013) and there are hundreds of different cybercrimes, ranging from hacking and scams, bullying, terrorism and cyber warfare (Brenner, 2010) to sexual solicitation, harassment and exposure to inappropriate content (O’Connell, 2003; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009). Like Sonia Livingstone (2014), I find it extremely important to stress here that risks and opportunities often go hand in hand and are perceived differently by different people. For example, an aggressive and mocking message that seems like bullying to parents and teachers can actually be an inside joke, a playful back-and-forth conversation that is encoded in rudeness, or entertaining “drama” (Marwick & boyd, 2014) for the young. Similarly, talking to strangers is perceived as risky behaviour by parents and teachers but sometimes welcomed by youths as an opportunity to meet new people (Livingstone, 2014) or a pleasure of risk (Buckingham, 2007).

Indeed, one of the main issues that predominates contemporary conversations about online safety of younger people is “stranger danger” (Livingstone, 2008; Guo, 2008). Stranger danger is often centred on online perverts (see **Study III**) and for most people a “pervert” is often seen as synonymous with a paedophile (boyd & Marwick, 2009) or an intimate cyberstalker (McFarlane & Bocij, 2003). The term, so far, “is almost exclusively used to describe men, as there has been less media coverage of women using the Internet to meet underage boys” (Marwick, 2008). One of the greater fears connected with this subject is also the fact that technology allows everything to be recorded and copied endlessly, so adding another layer to the online pervert-discourse: recording and sharing materials of cybersexploitation. Often the prefix “cyber” in different crimes is misleading and could be dropped because these crimes are not victimless, happening only in some virtual reality, but always having an impact on people’s lives in the physical world. Online harassment is seen even as more harmful, as it can be more persistent and is thus visible to more people (boyd & Marwick, 2009). Julia Davidson (2008: 25) explained, for instance, that victimized children are re-victimised each time their image is accessed, with images on the internet forming a permanent record of abuse.

Despite these serious and sometimes grave online risks, there is a prevailing ethos to online settings, especially when talking about young people’s practices. Michael Hoechsmann (2008: 68) noted that “it is [an ethos] typical of the lightheartedness of the peer-to-peer communication of youth – have a laugh, don’t take things too seriously”.

2.3.2. Audience and privacy management strategies

New media has expanded our possibilities to reach large audiences (e.g. public posts on social media) or very specific target audiences (e.g. tagging specific friends in posts) and people are making use of various audience-reaching strategies (Litt & Hargittai, 2016b). But the academic and public discussion tends to focus on how people are restricting access to their information online, the strategies that are being used to exclude people outside of the target audience. To wit: grouping people and restricting access to information for some (De Wolf & Pierson, 2014), fabrication of information to disguise one's identity or withholding information (Lwin, Li & Ang, 2011), obfuscation (Nissenbaum & Brunton, 2015), self-censoring (Oolo & Siibak, 2013), blocking people (Grinter, Palen & Eldridge, 2002), deleting existing information (Siibak & Murumaa, 2011), conducting a campaign of misinformation to protect their true identity that is called Face Painting (Bossewitch & Sinnreich, 2013) or "whitewalling" (Janisch, 2011). Sonia Livingstone and Ranjana Das (2013: 9) argue that "the more complex or, especially, the more "illegible" (or hard to read or decode) the text or media environment", the harder is the task of literacy. Such texts are sometimes great examples of an audience management and privacy-protecting strategy called social steganography (see **Study I**) – knowingly sending ambiguous messages, which can be understood one way by part of the audience and in another way by the rest (boyd & Marwick, 2011). For instance, a person can post a sentence that says nothing to the majority of the audience, but to a limited target group, who is familiar with the context and possesses the correct interpretative lens to decode the message, this sentence has a deeper meaning and speaks about the sender's mental state, recent developments in one's life or certain attitudes (boyd, 2010, **Study I**, **Study V**).

Younger people clearly have a wider repertoire of possible protective activities. The variety decreases significantly in the older age groups. Findings from a recent Estonian survey (Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014) indicated that in the 15–24 age group, the average number of privacy-protecting strategies used is 11, whereas 65–74-year-olds use an average of just two different privacy-protecting strategies. More active internet users probably need to use more strategies than people who use the internet for limited activities (e.g., just to read newspapers and use online banking) and usually the members of the older generations use the internet for fewer activities. Media repertoires and literacies vary within different generations, even when same media is used, and generations "tend to prioritise them according to the media system they domesticated during their adolescence" (Siibak & Vittadini, 2012).

All these literacies are connected to agency and structure. On the one hand, digital and social media literacies are about the agency of an individual, as the amount of disclosure is managed by the performer (Pearson, 2009), e.g. not using any privacy settings on an SNS can be a conscious choice that allows a person to reach more people. But partly it is about the possibilities of the structure, e.g. companies developing privacy-by-design solutions for their sites.

It is often a matter of digital legibility (Livingstone & Das, 2013), the designed-in readability and user-friendliness of a text or interface. But also, literacies have to do with the social structures, e.g. education system supporting development of norms and values as well as practical skills. Digital literacies have been declared a priority of 21st century education, declared a gate skill and a life skill (UNESCO Education Strategy, 2014; Karpati, 2011), so formal education has to develop these skills in students. Eden Litt and Eszter Hargittai (2016a) have drawn attention to the fact that the average everyday SNS user has likely not received any audience training or education related to online reputation. And at the same time, as Hoechsmann (2008: 63) notes, young people “are involved in one of the most extraordinary peer-to-peer learning experiments in human history”, and, as James Paul Gee (2003) adds, collective, cooperative and playful learning is just-in-time and on-demand.

2.4. The Estonian context

Estonia, a country often claimed to be an “e-state” and considered a technologically advanced information society (Collier, 2007) with a wide variety of online services (Pärna & von Tunzelmann, 2007), offers an illustrative case for studying people’s online practices and perceptions. Most Estonians are used to technology being integrated with their everyday lives and incorporated into their routines (Kalvet, Tiits & Hinsberg, 2013) and are considerably less disturbed and worried about the usage of their data than, for example, people are in the rest of Europe (Special Eurobarometer ..., 2015; Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014). Such trust in institutions and technology often manifests in trade-off-oriented behavior where a trustor willingly becomes vulnerable to the actions of another actor, “based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor” (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). The trade-off can be psychological and emotional (disclosing information about oneself can lead to richer intimate relationships) or of a utilitarian nature and tied to the consumption of a product or service (to use a web environment, one needs to disclose personal data). Such trust and lack of concern among Estonians is somewhat paradoxical considering Estonian history, which I would summarize here as “from Soviet to Skype”.

The country’s history as a member of the Soviet Union is a prime example of mutual surveillance and collective correction (Zdravomyslova & Voronkov, 2002). In the light of extreme state control over people’s information and privacy, as both working life and family life were subjected to state observation (*ibid*), we could expect members of older generations to be wary and apprehensive about any kind of surveillance, e.g. sharing their personal information online. Actually, the majority (74%) of the population stated their agreement with the claim “I have nothing to hide”; in fact, the members of older generations are even slightly more likely than young people to concur (Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014).

There are many possible reasons for such findings – considering Estonia’s history under a totalitarian regime, people’s experiences and past everyday practices that many still remember, it could be interpreted as a different, distancing coping mechanism. Susan Folkman and Richard Lazarus (1988) claimed that avoidance, among other emotion-focused coping strategies, is oriented toward managing the emotions of stress, and everyday life in USSR was a source of deep cultural stress (Kannike, 2006). At the same time, as Anu Kannike (2006: 225) points out, during much of the Soviet era, “the main slogan was opening up the private sphere to the state and the collective”, and this message might still be embedded in the collective consciousness, which is why older age groups were more likely to agree with the abovementioned statement.

Another aspect of such high trust indicators is what could be called a pendulum effect – going from one extreme (having a lot to hide from the Soviet state) to another (having nothing to hide from an independent Estonian state). Or, to give another example of this, transition from an over-regulated oppressive society in the communist system to a liberal capitalist one was paved with vigorous free-market radicalism (Aslund, 2002) and thus amplified the capitalism euphoria (Waterman, 2015) that fuelled trust in market-driven business. In addition, Soviet history has left people with the practices of counterculture, hidden meanings, double thinking and practices (one for the public self, one for the private self) (Kreegipuu, 2011), just as people in different over-controlling regimes have throughout history developed coping mechanisms and strategies to maintain at least some modicum of privacy (boyd, 2008).

Returning to the present, Skype-age Estonia, the country has gone from a dominantly oral communication-culture to a written one, one where people are using the internet daily for various functions and information is digitally stored. Even though we call everyone in general an internet user, people actually spend their time on the internet on a multitude of different activities. The largest share of people in Estonia use the internet to consume media and to communicate (9% and 16% of respondents respectively do not use the internet for these purposes); both of the activities are heavily dependent on audiences (Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014). Another online activity that brings the notion of audiences to the foreground and is also the focus of this thesis is social media – around 70% of Estonian internet users are using social media (Vihalemm & Kõuts-Klemm, 2017).

The most active internet users are, as expected, young people (see also **Study I**) – nearly 100% of 15–34-year-olds use the internet regularly and the most active social media users are found among the younger age groups (Vihalemm & Kõuts-Klemm, 2017; Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014). The research network EU Kids Online studied 9–16 year-olds’ internet use practices in 25 EU countries and found that Estonian youth stood out in European comparisons in that they expressed high levels of self-confidence in their digital literacies (presented as specific skills like changing privacy settings or blocking advertisements) (Livingstone *et al.*,

2011). Additionally, 67% of the young Estonians agreed with the assertion, “I know more about the internet than my parents” (Haddon *et al.*, 2012). This belief appears to be borne out by the actual situation – the latest Estonian results of Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) showed that only 30% of Estonians aged 16–65 are proficient in their information-processing skills, 28% demonstrate lower skills and nearly 30% cannot use ICT to solve practical problems (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt *et al.*, 2015), older age groups seem to be more passive and less versatile in their practices. Considering that effective functioning in digital society requires more than low-level skills, we can note a serious deficiency in people’s digital skills.

Estonian teachers, an important group whose perceptions and experiences with social media audiences are also under investigation in this thesis (**Study V**), are on average, among the oldest in OECD countries – the average age of Estonian teachers is 48 (Übius *et al.*, 2014). Teachers are among the adults that play an important role (along with parents) in developing youth digital literacies and thus, should have certain levels of digital skills and knowledge. Unfortunately, as the PIAAC report points out, Estonian educators’ ICT-based problem solving skills are among the lowest in Europe (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, students and teachers, representing two different generations, often exhibit different levels of ICT use and skills in the public discussions. Generally, too, Estonian students express high self-confidence in their digital skills, but Estonian teachers, much more often than their European colleagues, express doubt in their own operational skills (Survey of Schools..., 2013). It is interesting to note that at the same time, Estonian teachers had high levels of confidence in their social media skills (Survey of Schools..., 2013). Social media use has become so wide and these environments somewhat “domesticated” for different users that they perceive themselves to be competent enough to express confidence (**Study V**, Räim & Siibak, 2014).

When asked who should be responsible for the personal information available online, people (the young more than older age groups) usually perceive the individuals themselves accountable for it (Special Eurobarometer..., 2015; Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014). Personal responsibility of an individual once again raises the issue of digital literacies, as people need to have knowledge and skills to embody this responsibility and even to recognize which information is “worth” something to different actors.

Many widely covered and publicly discussed cases can be pointed out that seem contrary to the previously mentioned self-reported high skills levels and should draw attention precisely towards the disclosure of activities that are not considered private. Recently, in Estonia just like in many other countries around the world, we have witnessed many cases where people have miscalculated the spread of information disclosed in online settings, for example: a nurse in the intensive care unit of Tartu University Hospital posted a photo on Facebook of a dying child and a description of her work (Puuraid, 2012); an officer of the Defence Forces expressed verbal abuse on Facebook toward a soldier who died

in Afghanistan (Kaitsevāe ohvitser sõimas... 2012), a student was punished for a rude and critical tweet about a school play (Laks, 2016), etc.

New media has changed the pace of information sharing, norms and the role of audiences who actively participate in the communication process – be it by re-posting information on SNS; by changing and modifying the original message; by using the information that was disclosed in one context, in another one; or by decoding the message in an unexpected way. The concurrent existence of these different, often contradictory practices and realities made me ask: “How do people make sense of these increasingly difficult augmented realities and their roles in these realities? How do they navigate between ideal and ‘nightmare’ readers, considering that they are often all occupying the same ‘room’? What values and skills influence these decisions and practices? And how to study all of this?” From these initial intuitive ponderings, three larger research questions were developed, which are presented in the next section.

2.5. Research questions

Three main research questions have guided this thesis. The two latter ones will be answered in the Findings chapter, while the first research question will be answered in the Methodology section:

RQ1: How to study social media audiences using an approach that is consistent with the notion of active audiences? (Study II, Study IV)

How can creative research methods be applied in audience research for studying social media audiences? (Study II)

Which researcher roles are appropriate for ethical research on a sensitive subject? (Study IV)

RQ2: How do social media users construct their social media audience? (Study I, Study III and Study V)

What kind of information do social media users (more specifically students and teachers) disclose and perceive as suitable for social media? (Study I, Study V)

Which characteristics are inherent for perceived ideal audiences? (Study I)

Which characteristics are inherent for perceived nightmare audiences? (Study III)

Which factors have possibly influenced the development of these perceptions? (Study I, Study III, Study V)

RQ3: What characterizes audience awareness literacies of social media users? (Study I, Study V)

Which norms and rules of conduct are perceived to be a part of social media literacies that guide one’s behaviour as a producer on SNS? (Study I, Study V)

Which coping strategies are social media users employing to deal with context collapse on SNS? (Study I, Study III, Study V)

3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will give an overview of three different empirical studies that were carried out for this dissertation to answer the previously described research questions. To understand how the young and the educators make sense of online audiences, I made use of qualitative data collection methods such as focus groups and in-depth interviews (**Study I, Study II, Study V**), enriched with creative research methods (**Study I, Study III**). Qualitative research methods are fitting for the approach of social constructivism with its idea that the world and its meaning are constructed by constant social interaction, shared and collaborative by nature. As reality is plastic and pluralistic, kept “real” by thoughts and actions of people, the most important experiences are obtained by communicating face to face, as the other’s subjective reality is available and the present is shared by the participants at the moment of communication (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Developing a methodological fit for researching young people on a sensitive topic (nightmare audiences) is a substantial part of my work, so the use of creative research methods (Gauntlett, 2007) deserves a longer look in the context of empowering and engaging participants (**Study II, Study IV**). I will also follow the lead of many scholars who are taking a long analytical look at the role of the researcher (e.g. Taylor, 2011; Abell *et al.*, 2006; Eder & Fingerson, 2003) (**Study IV**).

3.1. Methods and data

Study I is based on focus groups conducted in 2010, designed to study high school students’ perceptions about the imagined audience on Facebook. The participants were 16–20-year-old high school students (N=15). Most of the participants attended 10th grade (N=11), and some of the participants were from the 12th grade (N=4). At the time, I was their media studies teacher and thus had a semi-insider look into the group (more about the role of the researcher in chapter 3.3). All in all, six female and nine male students participated, they were divided into two mixed-gender groups in the beginning of June 2010. In the first phase of the focus groups, the participants were asked more general questions about their overall internet usage practices and preferences. Then the discussion moved to social media, namely their use of Facebook and perceived audiences in this environment. For example, the students were asked to describe their friend lists and to classify these individuals according to their user practices. In the final phase of the focus group, the discussion dealt with problems of netiquette, especially related to sharing private information online. These focus groups also served as a testing ground for exploring how creative research methods work in a group setting and what is the potential added value of creative approaches (**Study II**). Focus group participants were asked to form pairs and draw sketches (n=39) of user types they considered to be most

prominent on Facebook. The aim of deploying creative research methods (Gauntlett, 2007) was to give the students an opportunity to address issues discussed in the previous phase from a different perspective and to allow them to express their thoughts creatively. An overview of the creative approach is below, in the next sub-chapter.

Focus groups were also used in **Study V**, where four group interviews with Estonian teachers (n=21) took place in different high schools in spring 2013 (from March to June). The aim was to analyse teachers' perceptions, encounters, and experiences in relation to online audiences, privacy and publicity in the digital era. I was not involved in the data collection phase, as the interviews were carried out by two students, Sandra Räim and Mehis Tuisk. My contribution is mainly analytical here, as I conducted the analysis of the interviews. The final sample was comprised of three men and 18 women who taught different subjects in their respective schools and were between the ages of 23–51. The strategic selection of participants for this study was based on four criteria:

- the participant had to work as a teacher;
- they had to teach (not necessarily only) in high school and thus more likely to have students as online friends, as the older students are legally allowed to use Facebook (forbidden under 13 years of age) and are more mature and teachers' motivation to add them as friends is higher;
- they had to have an active profile on Facebook;
- in addition, each focus group was to have one teacher who is also a class teacher (organizing events, administrating the practicalities, mediating the information from school board, etc.), as these teachers tend to have a closer relationship with the students, they sometimes serve as gatekeepers between the school and the student.

In the first phase of the focus groups, the participants were asked more general questions about their overall social media usage practices, preferences and the meaning of privacy. Then the discussion moved to the perceived differences in students' and teachers' attitudes of private and public information. In the final phase of the interviews, the relationships of teachers and students on Facebook were looked at more closely and the participants discussed the principles of such communication, netiquette, ideals and common practices.

Study III's participants were recruited by me, as I was their media studies' teacher at the time and the final sample of **Study III** consisted of ten 12th grade students aged 17–20, five male and five female participants (reflections about the role of teacher-researcher and ethical dilemmas concerning recruitment can be found in chapter 3.3). Data collection began in spring of 2012, where a class of high school students were asked to draw a picture of an "internet pervert", with no further specific instructions given. Two months later, to provide time and reflective processes, follow-up interviews were conducted with students (n=10) who were interested in participating in the study. In the first part of the interviews, the participants were asked more general questions about their

internet usage practices, followed by general questions about internet crimes. In the second and the most crucial phase of the interview, sketches drawn by the interviewees were presented and questions about the details on the sketches were asked. The interviews ended with a broader approach, with the students being asked about their thoughts about the possibility of rehabilitation, just punishment of the criminals in question and prevention of such online crimes. This study was the basis for answering my first research question and the process and analysis will be discussed more thoroughly in next chapter (3.2. Studying sensitive topics using creative research methods).

To analyse the qualitative data from the focus group interviews of **Study I** and **Study V** and semi-structured individual interviews of **Study III**, I used within-case and cross-case qualitative text analysis, which can be more specifically termed thematic qualitative text analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with elements from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I stress that my aim was not to apply grounded theory to the detail, perform a “‘full-fat’ grounded theory” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 8), but rather to make use of the analysis processes, as Pranee Liamputtong (2011: 173) for one has pointed out that “the techniques used for analysing data in thematic analysis, and grounded theory [and in many approaches to qualitative text analysis] are broadly similar”.

The first step was immersion, which “usually involves ‘repeated reading’ of the data, and reading the data in an active way – searching for meanings, patterns” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 16). When conducting the analysis, I compared the material constantly within the text and with other texts, outside sources and knowledge, with emphasis on asking questions and constant comparison throughout the analysis process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each new case – part of the text – was compared to previously coded ones, trying to find common ground where possible, and if necessary, create a new topic category. So, first, I constructed loosely named inductive codes and did some *in vivo* coding (in **Study III**, for example: “places of pervs”; “candyman”, “perceived norms?”, “him/her”, “going perv”, etc.; or in **Study V**: “inappropriate content”, “good content”, “definition of privacy”, “smart me”, “stupid me”, “teacher invading student’s privacy”, “student invading teacher’s privacy” etc.).

After close readings and initial open coding, I was able to structure different codes into more logical systems, putting data back together in new ways and making connections between categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). So, secondly, axial coding was carried out, to focus and work on the codes gathered from one specific category. When I had constructed core categories or main axes (for example, in **Study I**: “sharing information”, “aspects of netiquette”, etc.; or in **Study V**: “teacher’s roles”, “value of privacy”, “teacher-student relationship”, “teacher-parent relationship”, etc.), keyword-based coding followed, where recurring sub-themes were checked, complemented and organized.

In the last phase of the analysis, selective coding and subsequent modifications generated an increasingly consistent and logical structure to the analysis. Just to give a few examples here: in **Study I**, I was able to construct a typology

of information-sharing practices, as well as typology of perceived Facebook audience members; in **Study III**, I constructed typical online-grooming scenarios and formed comprised sort of a stereotypical detailed profile of the perceived online-predator. **Study V**'s analysis process differed somewhat, as we already had some previous knowledge on the topic, theoretical deductive and selective coding (Lonkila, 2004) were used more systematically and throughout the whole process of data analysis. Also, **Study V**'s analysis was carried out using qualitative data analysis software Maxqda, all others were done by hand and using ordinary word processing software.

3.2. Studying sensitive topics using creative research methods

As I was planning to tackle the subject of arguably the “worst” of the nightmare audiences, by wanting to study young people’s perceptions and experiences with online predators (**Study III**), I was faced with a problem – how to study this? As researchers, we often have “no handbook or manual to follow.... To guide us in our research, we must equally value and rely upon our strength of character, goodwill, our gut instincts and emotional intelligence as we do our formal training” (Taylor, 2011: 18). The research design of **Study III** had to consider the sensitive nature of the topic, the ethical and moral aspects, the importance and possible effects such members of the audience have on the young, etc. In addition, I wanted to incorporate the idea of empowering the participants. In the next sections, I will give an answer to the first research question, “How to study social media audiences using an approach that is consistent with the notion of active audiences?” (How can creative research methods be applied in audience research for studying social media audiences? Which researcher roles are appropriate for ethical research on a sensitive subject?).

One of the most crucial and difficult questions a researcher needs to face while conducting research involving young people is how to protect the participants and handle their personal experiences with extra care and sensitivity. Researchers should explain the process and aim of the research thoroughly and clearly for specific age groups (Dockett & Perry, 2011); ensure confidentiality; if possible, emphasize that the participants can leave at any point of the research without any consequences; overall voluntary involvement (Dockett & Perry, 2011); allow the participants to choose whether, how and when they are interviewed (Moore, Saunders & McArthur, 2011); and have exit strategies and support (Bradwell *et al.*, 2011) in sensitive cases.

Traditional qualitative research methods ask research participants to orally reflect upon a topic and leave little time for answering, so I was looking for a data collection method that would allow greater flexibility and multiform approach to the subject. This led me to a creative research approach that tries to

take into consideration the fact that creative reflective processes take more time and thus also demand greater reflection on the part of the participant (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006). Creative research methods are participatory in their nature, where the participants are asked to make something (e.g. films, collages, scrapbooks, drawings) that is then often used as elicitation material. Or as David Gauntlett (2007: 3) put it, participants are asked “to spend time applying their playful or creative attention to the act of making something symbolic or metaphorical, and then reflecting on it”. Thorough overview and reflection of the method is available in **Study II**, applied as an exercise in **Study I** and embraced fully in **Study III**.

Study III's students were average Estonian youths and to participate, they did not have to have negative experiences with online “perverts”. Nevertheless, in the research process, it became evident that the majority of participants had had some sorts of encounters with these nightmare readers on SNS. I was prepared for the fact that sensitive topics of research – those where participants may feel uncomfortable expressing their thoughts (Noland, 2012) – often require special attention on how to protect the participants, and also a strategic research design, considering possible harmful consequences of participation (e.g., painful memories). I followed the advice of Virginia Dickson-Swift, Erica James, Sandra Kippen and Pranee Liamputtong (2007) and had the contact details ready for a professional who could offer advice and counselling to the participant if a need arose, which it did not.

The sketches of **Study I** and the drawings of **Study III** were analysed to some extent by combining the visual socio-semiotic methods and discourse analysis techniques. The concept and approach of “reading images” that was introduced by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) and developed further in the studies of Philip Bell (2001) was partially used for analysing students' sketches from focus groups. More specifically, different analytical tools were used in the analysis of the drawings, such as:

- demand-offer relationship with the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), where the depicted is either the object of the gaze, seemingly not aware of the looker, or demands contact with the viewer;
- viewer's point of view (looking down on or up to) as a representation of symbolic power: “if you look down on something, you look at it from a position of symbolic power. If you look up at something, that something has some kind of symbolic power over you. At eye-level here is a relation of symbolic equality“ (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 135);
- horizontal angles, as frontality confronts the viewer directly and if something is shown from the side, the viewer remains on the sidelines (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001).
- facial expressions, inspired by aspects of Goffman's (1979) method for decoding visual images;
- social distance, inspired by Edward T. Hall (1966): intimate distance (viewer sees the head only), close personal (head and shoulders are depicted), far personal (viewer sees a person from waist up), close social (the whole figure

is visible on the picture), far social (viewer sees the figure and space around it) and public distance (at least five people in the picture).

In **Study I** and **Study III**, the participants' attention was drawn to these details as well during the interviews, so we analyzed the drawings "together" in a sense. Advocates of the new, more collaborative research approach, such as Pat Thomson (2008), have argued that the analysis of images in general, and the ones made by children and young people in particular, needs to be a highly conscious activity as young people's images "may not be amenable to straightforward adult readings" (Thomson, 2008: 10) (**Study II**).

Gauntlett (2007) has pointed up three levels of engagement in creative research: 1) the act of producing something, 2) mental processes surrounding production and 3) orally interpreting and commenting upon work done. Based on **Study IV**, I argue that a fourth level should be added and treated as equally important: long-term processing and internalization of aspects of the study (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Levels of participant engagement in creative research methods

As I have had the opportunity to maintain contact with the participants of the study, I have witnessed how inclusive research experience has had a long lasting effect on some of the young participants. Such "confessionals" are considered to be difficult but rewarding processes for the study participants (Lupton, 1998) as they might feel empowered by the opportunity to share their stories. Topics that

have been at the heart of the studies reappear in social media comments, answers in school essays, projects and conversations taking place even years after the research (**Study IV**).

3.3. Researchers' role: the dilemma of insider-outsiderness

The question of involvement with the participants and the field, or insider-outsiderness, is always an important aspect, especially when researching sensitive topics involving young people (**Study IV**). In fact, when engaging in qualitative studies, one should acknowledge that the researcher is always located somewhere socially, not fixed in their position but rather continuously moving back and forth between insiderness and outsiderness (Griffith, 1998). The latter belief is in line with the previously mentioned exhaustion of the term "audience" (Livingstone, 2003), as the traditional approach to the role of observer-researcher is also being challenged in certain disciplines. Much like the media, research seems to be becoming increasingly interactive and based on two-way communication and the blurring lines between sender and receiver.

Recently, in the fields of youth and subcultural studies, researchers have enthusiastically used opportunities that insiderness creates for the researcher (Taylor, 2011). These advantages could be categorized into four broad values: 1) the value of shared experiences (Labaree, 2002; Garton & Copland, 2010); 2) the value of greater access as there is closer and more regular contact with the participants and the field (Taylor, 2011); 3) the value of cultural interpretation, which includes being able to understand the lingo (Taylor, 2011) and certain expressions and codes used; and 4) the value of deeper understanding and clarity of thought for the researcher (Labaree, 2002).

These advantages were valuable in conducting **Study I** among my 10th and 12th grade students and **Study III** with the 12th-graders I was teaching at that time. This age group was seen as beneficial also because they are mentally more fully formed, no longer children but approaching the age of young adulthood and had had their early socialization through the internet. As such, I believed they could share valuable insight into what was happening to kids online. Being a bit older possibly gave them perspective on things they had encountered online and provided a more comfortable position to comment by looking back at their younger selves. Participation in the research projects was always voluntary.

It is important to address the problematic issues of research ethics embedded in my role as a teacher-researcher in **Study I** and **Study III**. Using my advantage as a teacher and access to the age group relevant for the research, I needed to plan very carefully how to facilitate a safe context for the participating students and ensure quality of the responses, as much as was possible in such a social setting.

First, trying to follow the principle of informed, freely given consent, I explained the general topic of my work to the students before carrying out the data collection. I emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and proposed that all participating students would receive an extra grade in media studies. Students who were not interested in participating would have another task of equivalent weight as a way of earning the same grade. All of the students were free to reconsider their participation at any given time without any consequences and I emphasized this on several occasions and phases of the empirical research. For example, the drawing exercise in **Study III** was completed by nearly everyone in this particular class but a half of them were interested in participating in the follow-up interviews and few changed their mind shortly before the interviews.

I acknowledged that, as a teacher and a “nightmare reader” by default, I was in a more powerful outsider position in comparison to the participants. The problems arise mainly because although the participation in such empirical research projects is voluntary, the young may not see consent as voluntary, “particularly in the context of coercive relations” (Gallagher, 2009: 16), as the relationship between teacher-student tends to be (Kim, 2012). Martin Richards and Virginia Morrow (1996: 101) also have pointed out that young participants “who are required to participate in research in schools may not feel in a position to dissent, simply because most (if not all) tasks and activities in school are compulsory”. When designing research with youth participants, scholars have been encouraged to evaluate the context of collecting data during school hours and classes and on the impact of the spatial and temporal context of participation. It was especially important to consider such dynamics due to the sensitive nature of **Study III**, so I planned the interviews to take place in springtime, when the 12th grade was preparing to leave school and I would not, even hypothetically, have any institutional power to influence their grade or further advancement in classes.

On a related note, I had the pleasure to teach subjects that were so-called “creative courses”, an addition to the general school curricula. I believe I managed to achieve a good, trusting and solid relationship with my students over the years because they valued and appreciated the media-related discussions in class, took part in assignments actively and with what I interpreted as enjoyment, and often came to discuss various topics after class. I have reason to believe I managed to establish a great relationship with the students. I was given the teacher of the year award based on student feedback at the time these research projects took place, which can be taken as an indication of the mutual trust and friendship we had built in classes.

By the time of **Study III**, I had been teaching these students for three years and it was in a way a “‘shortcut’ establishing a research relationship” (Kim, 2012: 268). For instance, the shared history between me as the researcher and my students as the interviewees made it possible for me to understand the lingo without disrupting the conversational flow (e.g. “*this is extra poor facerape*“ translates into “this is an unimaginative hijacked account status update”).

Furthermore, my experience shows that participants mostly felt comfortable around a person they knew and had talked to extensively (e.g. M4: “*I think we have maybe talked about it once?*”).

I also used specific interviewing techniques (see **Study III** and **Study IV**) to narrow the hierarchical gap and prepare to do as much as possible to ensure quality of collected data: shared personal stories so as to make participants feel more comfortable with sharing information (Berger, 2001), emphasized the confidentiality of the interview to avoid under-reporting “socially undesirable behaviour” (Ogan, Karakuş & Kurşun, 2013: 135), used a friendly conversational tone and made sympathetic responses, as well as probing and offering sets of alternatives in questions (Hodkinson, 2005).

Nevertheless, as expected, a few students seemed less communicative (the shortest interview lasted 36 minutes), avoided some topics, tried to give what were probably perceived as “correct answers” and talked mostly from a generalised position that others might adhere to. The latter was actually considered as an interviewing strategy beforehand, giving participants privacy if preferred. For example, “I have this friend“ was a fairly common beginning of stories told during the interviews. Using such a phrase might be a safe way to talk about one’s own experiences, but of course, such a construct might also be used to tell a story about a real friend.

Instead of trying to be an insider in a quickly changing youth culture (Casas *et al.*, 2014) which can be viewed as a practice of “faking friendship” (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002), I agree with John Davis (1998: 329), who has encouraged researchers who are doing research with children and young people to take on a role of a “friendly adult” or a “non-authoritarian adult”. Some of the participants were clearly excited by a chance to have a discussion on the topic with an adult interested in their thoughts and experiences. For example, when answering a question about prevention (“how could we prevent people from ‘turning perv’ in your opinion?”), a male participant of **Study III** responded with great passion and very well-developed ideas about the possible advantages of hobby school education. It almost seemed like he had long been waiting for someone to ask his opinion on the matter. Similar to Kristen Ali Eglinton (2013), I found that many participants saw the study as a chance to talk to someone on a topic that may have been off limits in discussion with other adults in their lives (**Study IV**).

4. FINDINGS

In this section, I will present the main results of my empirical studies (**Study I**, **Study III**, **Study V**). The first and second part will focus on content that is being shared on SNS and the audiences perceived in social media. The third part will take a closer look at the audience awareness literacies, how the participants place themselves in the communicative act, and what norms, rules and strategies are perceived on SNS.

4.1. Disclosing information on SNS

The participants of my studies (**Study I**, **Study III**, **Study V**) have all accepted and embraced social media environments and claimed to use them actively, especially Facebook. Disclosing information on SNS is the force that makes these sites so addictive and drives the communication although both the younger (**Study I**, **Study III**) and older participants (**Study V**) expressed disdain towards overly active SNS use. Often, one of the more accepted and “safest” ways of using social media was perceived as taking the role of a “lurker”, a quiet onlooker (**Study I**, **Study V**). The findings of **Study V** suggest that when teachers are posting information, they often do it from a position of an educator, by trying to set a good example to the others, for instance by sharing educational content or drawing attention to students’ content one might consider problematic. Student participants from **Study I**, however, described diverse information being disclosed, often in communicative relationships taking place simultaneously.

When comparing teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards disclosing information online, I noticed that the interviewed teachers perceived SNS to be a public space at first glance and, in abstract terms, compared the communication there to giving a speech in a public park (**Study V**). But when interviewees described their own use and experiences, it was evident that teachers perceive their own SNS profiles as more private (e.g. they do not accept friend requests from students to avoid having access to the information disclosed). In a way, they described young people as their nightmare readers – because of their students, teachers have to “be alert” and sometimes feel they are on duty around the clock. And indeed, participants in **Study V** claimed to purposely share material that is educational for the students in their social networks, once again taking on the responsibilities of a role model. Mostly, the teachers named moderate social media usage and discreet sharing as one of the main guidelines for teachers on Facebook. Sentences like “I really don’t share anything”, “I have the same old three pictures up, no more”, “I actually don’t have any pictures there” turned the discussion into a sort of a competition on who discloses the least information. Young participants, on the other hand, described many different types of information being shared on SNS (**Study I**, Siibak & Murumaa, 2011), indicating the perception of audiences to be more diverse and nuanced.

4.2. Young people’s imagined audiences – from ideal to nightmare

To understand the intricate details of audience perception, I started from trying to map who young people perceive as the main actors on SNS, Facebook in particular. In the focus group discussions in **Study I**, different Facebook user types were sketched and discussed. Six main user types, and thus potential members of their imagined audiences, were perceived by the participants. Figure 2 shows different user types, moving from ideal audiences to nightmare ones:

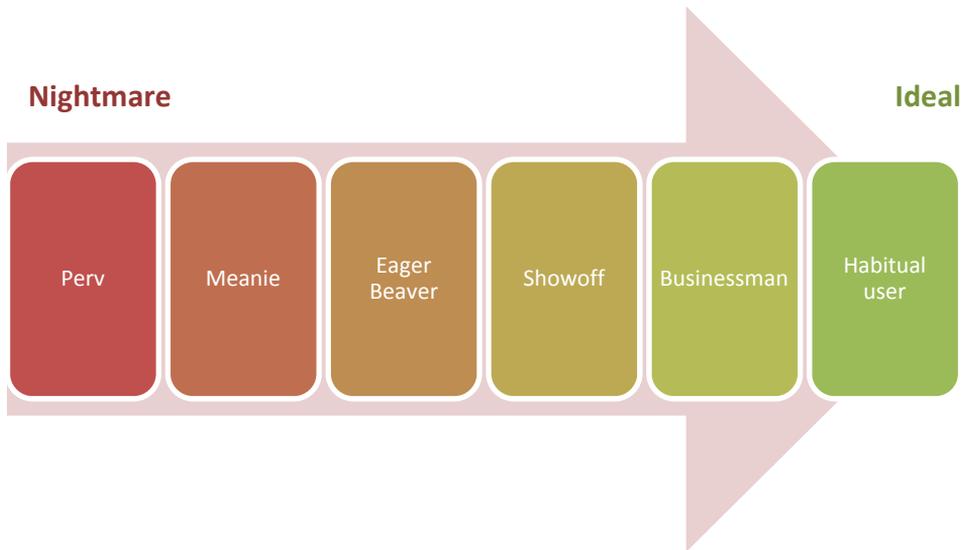


Figure 2: Participants’ perceptions of Facebook user types.

The specific placement of user types was not designed as an exercise for the participants; the succession is based on my analysis of the interviews. The discussions with young participants (**Study I, Study III**) indicate that the ideal audience – the one that producers can identify with and for whom sent messages are meant for – can be described by the user type **Habitual User** (see depictions for different types from **Study I**). Habitual User was described as a quite active but laid-back Facebook user who does not stand out among other Facebook users, and who communicates on the platform with their “real” offline friends. To some degree, the young participants in **Study I** could also identify with the actions of the **Businessman**, who was perceived to be an adult using Facebook for professional and work-related purposes; and to a certain extent also with the user type referred to as the **Showoff**, who shares mainly visuals, uploading countless photos and videos of themselves, usually selfies.

The **Eager Beaver**, however, who was defined to be extremely communicative and overly enthusiastic or motivated by a need to demonstrate their superiority passively, was considered “lame” and superficial by participants.

In comparison to the previously described user types, two user types emerged from the data, which could be categorized as nightmare audiences – the **Meanie** and the **Perv**. The Meanie, whom participants described as a user who expresses a mean, critical and malevolent attitude, was often perceived to be an older SNS user. Sometimes, teachers were considered to fit the Meanie user type (or the work-oriented Businessman user type as well), with the perceived “otherness” created by age. Thus the findings of **Study I** indicate that the young people in the sample still saw various social media environments, including Facebook, as younger people’s territory and therefore greeted older users on the platform with sarcasm and rejection. It is important to note that data collection for **Study I** took place in 2010 and in the following years, older generations have started using SNSs more actively. This is predictable, as the early adopters of technology tend to be young and older age groups migrate when the technologies are able to deliver real benefits (Rogers, 1995; Stroud, 2008). Although using Facebook has now become the general norm in most age groups, similar dismissive attitudes can probably be observed with regard to other newer SNSs.

The participants of **Study I** also usually perceived the user type Perv, as an older foreign male who pretended to be much younger than his real age in search for children or Estonian women on SNS. In case of the Perv, this otherness is constructed through other criteria even more than through age (**Study I**, **Study III**) – (cultural) background, nationality, age, sex, sexuality and psyche that all “converge into a state of foreignness” (Kristeva, 1991: 96). In the next sections, I will present the results of my studies (**I**, **III** and **V**) that took a closer look at these nightmare audience members in interaction with young people.

4.2.1. Teachers as nightmare readers for young people

The students in **Study I** expressed the opinion that teachers’ main motivation for using Facebook is to “keep an eye on their students”, making the educators a controlling element in what was perceived mainly as a youth space and place. The aim of **Study V** was to further explore this group of potential nightmare readers, the teachers, and their thoughts on imagined audiences on social media and related topics.

Although teachers who participated in **Study V** described how they communicate via Facebook with their friends and family, they also frequently listed students as an important part of their imagined and actual audience. On the one hand, teachers spoke of constantly being “alert” when posting information about their thoughts and activities, and on the other hand, described real communication situations with students on SNS. Furthermore, many teacher-participants of **Study V** lived up to the perception of **Study I**’s students – they were using SNS to monitor their students’ online practices and intervene when perceived necessary.

Interviewed teachers habitually expressed the belief that they were knowledgeable about the SNS environments and they carried the universally applicable norms and values that should guide communication taking place there. The young participants in **Study I** and **Study III** did not share this view as teachers' (and the older generation's) online practices were often described as out of date, out of touch and different from that of young people. Teachers of **Study V** touched upon the generational differences as well, discussing how the young and previous generations define public and private differently, how the young are careless and superficial about the protection of their intimate communication and personal info. Even when the educators conceded that young people are generally tech-savvy, the youths' knowledge about applicable social norms was perceived as inadequate by the participants of **Study V**. At the same time, the belief in educators' ability to interact with students in an adequate manner, even in highly problematic situations, was very evident in **Study V**.

It should be noted, that in many cases, such confidence should be called in question, as teachers of **Study V** described real experiences where they had acted in a way that can be interpreted as ethically questionable, depending on the point of view. The norms that are perceived on SNS are not clear-cut and shared by all. For example, one teacher of **Study V** talked about a case where female students had posted a photo where they were "half-naked" in the shower and educators intervened, leaving the students baffled as to why the school had meddled in their personal affairs. What one perceived as a harmless experiment with one's sexuality was perceived by another as publication of material that fell scarcely short of soft-core pornography. In another case, a participating teacher expressed an opinion that schools should hire hackers, so that "teachers can access these communities the students have". This is a serious discord in opinions, as most students value certain aspects of privacy.

4.2.2. Online predators as nightmare readers for young people

The interviews in **Study III** revealed that at some point in their lives, most of the participants had either been approached by people they defined as perverts, had noticed "creepy pervs" on SNSs or had a story to share about an episode that had happened to their friends. They predominantly used the word pervert or "perv" to refer to an adult person who sought contact with underage children (**Study III**) or young women (**Study I**) with a sexual intention – that is, the person used sexual images or words in communication. The interviewees believed that an online pervert might have different aims and reasons that triggered their actions and practices: talking dirty online just to prove that they could manipulate a young child into meeting them if they wanted to; inducing the victim to remove clothing online; getting together with the victim offline only to derive exhilaration from the idea of being able to potentially "get" this young person; or having sex with a minor in an offline setting (**Study III**).

Occasionally, participants talked about the ambiguity of the concept, as everybody does something online that can be seen as perversion by someone else. In one case, an interviewee in **Study III** had drawn a shadow of a person in a mirror (see drawings from **Study III**) and annotated the drawing with additional texts – “It is in all of us! Online-pervert!” and “Try to say no!!!”

Most of the interviewees in **Study III** said that online perverts did not present themselves as they really were, but rather used deceptive photos that showed them from far away or from a clever angle, trying to make them look better and younger than their real ages. The real appearance of a pervert was usually described as ugly, hairy and dirty, wearing unfashionable clothes and thick glasses. Living only behind a computer was also expressed by drawing the pervert as having bags under their eyes or a pale complexion or being overweight. In half of the drawings from **Study III**, the pervert was smiling, in an effort to make them “more trustworthy” and “seemingly friendly”.

It is apparent in both **Study I** and **Study III** that the young people tended to construct a profile of a pervert who was different from them. The main characteristics that were often used to define the pervert were age, sex, nationality, sexuality and a problematic personal history. According to the students, a “typical perv” was:

- **older:** in fact, age was most often used as a defining characteristic of all nightmare readers, being different from the youth’s own generation.
- **male:** the pervert’s male gender was said to be consistent with the media coverage of such stories and, very stereotypically, was in some cases attributed to the idea that males are unable to empathize as much as females (**Study III**).
- **foreign:** although the students in **Study I** agreed that Estonians could be found among members of the Perv user type, the communication style of foreign members of the user type were referred to as harassment, in contrast to the Estonians who were perceived as “just smooth-talking”. If the former was considered inexcusable, the latter behaviour was often justified and forgiven.
- **non-heterosexual:** **Study III** (to some extent also **Study I**) reveals that the participants perceived a homosexual to be a bit dangerous and strange, a deviation from the norm, and therefore also fitting the profile of the pervert. In fact, on several occasions, interviewees stumbled when speaking about “perverts”, “paedophiles” and “fags” (an offensive Estonian term for a homosexual, “pede” is etymologically closely related), as though mixing up these concepts. Using these words interchangeably could have socio-psychological roots but it could also be partly language specific.
- **with a traumatic childhood:** majority of the young respondents in **Study III** described surprisingly sympathetically an uncaring, abusive family as a possible root source for a person’s own abusive and deviant actions. In addition, bullying and social exclusion from peers was described often as key factor in “turning perv”.

Generally, I noticed also in **Study III** that technology is seen as the trigger of deviant behaviour (connected with millions but essentially alone) and at the same time, as a disciplinary measure (the internet as a public and persistent global pillory).

4.3. Audience awareness literacies of social media users

Students and teachers who participated in the studies all said they found social media to be a crucial part of today's everyday practices: it helps them to keep in touch with friends, search for information and organize work/school-related communication, among other uses. (**Study I** and **Study V**).

As we see from previous chapters, the participants do perceive the audience in SNS to be quite multifaceted. Nevertheless, remembering different members of the audience while posting is a difficult task. By their own admission, when people disclose information, they usually think of specific people who would find the information amusing, interesting or relevant in some way (**Study I** and **Study V**). In the process, people simply overlook whole segments of our actual audiences.

When asked who are the most vulnerable members (in the context of making different mistakes on social media) of the audiences in SNS, the perception was rather uniform in **Study I**, **Study III** and **Study V** – younger children. Primary socialization that usually takes place in a family setting was perceived important for developing digital and social media skills (especially evident in **Study III**). Peers were seen as important agents for secondary socialization and developing the abovementioned skills, for without peers a person could be deprived of social norms and practices (**Study III**). Despite the somewhat critical stance that young people tend to take towards educators (**Study I** and **Study III**), formal education was seen as having significant importance as a surrounding structure, too (**Study III**).

The role of media as an agent of socialization in developing digital literacies came up in many parts of the interviews. For example, the teachers in **Study V** said that privacy issues were “in fashion” and trendy because of wide media coverage. Or, to give another example, the perception of the online pervert in **Study I** and **Study III** was heavily influenced by the case of a Spanish girl⁴ and

⁴ A news story was published in 2008 in Estonian media about a Spanish girl who had contacted hundreds of young male Estonian users of the SNS rate.ee and lured over 40 of them into taking nude photos of themselves on webcams (Kase, 2008). The girl proceeded to demand more and more revealing and intimate material from the boys, e.g. telling them to masturbate on camera and arranging for boys to meet up to make sex videos (Lamp, 2009). When her requests were refused, she threatened to go public with the material that she already had. This large-scale extortion was revealed when the family of a 14-year-old boy who had committed suicide because of this scheme decided to go public. It was later confirmed that the Spanish teenage girl was actually a 22-year-old man named Benjamin Cabello Sanchez, who is believed to have victimized over 700 people across Europe (Birkan, 2009).

various online-safety campaigns and media narratives that emphasize the importance of not talking to strangers, as they could be grown-up men posing as children. Alternatively, the pervert's typical characteristic of being non-heterosexual was said to be based on crime shows where the perpetrators are often depicted as deviating from the social norm which, among others, can be suppressed sexuality.

Generally, the participants in **Study III** said that wide media coverage of cases that involve internet perverts and their crimes is seen as necessary but today's fragmented online media that reports cases piece by piece leaves an impression of having a widespread massive "perv-problem" and could be considered fear-mongering in the participants' opinion. According to the participants in **Study III**, media should also avoid the boomerang effect, which means that audiences turn numb to a problem and potential online predators might get inspiration from the news coverage that includes lurid details of heinous online crimes.

Interviews with teachers and students indicated that mostly people are certain that they have the knowledge and skills to handle problems that might arise in online contexts. For example, teachers believed that one simply needs to be a "thinking, rational person" (**Study V**) to be able to navigate sometimes tricky student-teacher interactional social situations online. Students were similarly convinced they have a good grasp on the skills, knowledge and norms present on SNS (**Study I**).

At the same time, the two groups were very critical towards each other's digital literacies. Teachers perceived the students to share too much (**Study V**) (too-revealing images, excessive candour about emotions, questionable – illegal or malicious – content) and, having internalized the image of a teacher as a moral compass in society, felt the need to intervene.

Students, on the other hand, perceived the teachers to interfere too much (calling them to order, criticizing, invading "their space" by just being present) (**Study I**). There is a conflict – teachers feel obligated to intervene in situations they perceive problematic and students resent such interventions.

4.3.1. Perceived netiquette on social media

There are many different, ever-evolving strategies of communication that form the SNS landscape but usually some general rules of conduct are perceived. We asked from the teachers of **Study V** which guidelines they perceive and try to follow on social media. The young participants in **Study I** discussed different types of Facebook users and from these texts I could extrapolate similar guidelines. When we compare the main guidelines perceived for SNS communication, similarities can be noticed: see Table 1.

Table 1: Similarities in students’ and teachers’ perceptions of SNS netiquette based on Study I and Study V

	Teachers	Students
Moderate use	<i>“I don’t want to be available 24/7”</i>	<i>“those who pound away on the computer all day long [are to be mocked]”</i>
Discreet sharing	<i>“I have the same old three pictures up, no more”</i>	<i>“looks around, likes a couple of things and...”, “does not really stand out over there”</i>
Selective friending	<i>“I am very picky in whom I accept as a friend on Facebook”, “I will not add the naughtiest boy in third grade as my Facebook friend”</i>	<i>[disapprovingly] “they want to get many friends”, “some sort of a competition”</i>
Avoiding expressions of strong emotions	<i>“It sickens me when a girl uploads a picture and another girl writes: “aah, you are so beautiful, you are the most beautiful woman that I know””</i>	<i>[negative behaviour description] “And then they, like, just comment every single picture of you, like “wow you are so cool!”</i>
Disclosing (professionally relevant) positive information	<i>“I put up stuff that I am really proud of”</i>	<i>[businessmen] “put up pictures of themselves that are like: “Here I am with my suitcase, trading””</i>

Although students and teachers often see themselves as perfectly capable of making informed and ethical choices on social media, comprehending the netiquette adequately, discussions revealed some inconsistencies in the self-reported skills and knowledge of participants, as people seem to overestimate their abilities. For example, despite the fact that Facebook offers a variety of filters for sharing information only to specific groups of people and hiding it from the others, users simply do not understand customizing privacy settings, leaving the default settings in place (**Study I**, see also Siibak & Murumaa, 2011). Similarly, interviews with teachers in **Study V** show that educators would like to think of themselves as knowledgeable actors who have the necessary skills and knowledge to mediate social media to students, yet in actuality they might not be so skilled. In many parts of the interviews, some participants revealed inadvertently being somewhat digitally naive (Hargittai, 2010) and that, unbeknownst to them, there are gaps in their knowledge, for example not knowing that Facebook allows the user to block private messages, having problems managing their friend list (accidentally added or blocked people), the unawareness of scam applications, etc.

4.3.2. Audience and privacy management strategies

The youth participants in **Study I** and **Study III** described many strategies that protect their privacy and general well-being. Avoiding disclosure wherever possible, deleting information and contacts were most mentioned across the discussions in **Study I**. **Study III** indicated that young people know how to identify a potentially harmful person by recognizing certain code words (“sponsorship”, “do you have a webcam”, etc. in the case of online-perverts).

In addition, what teachers of **Study V** perceived as conflicts that call for intervention are in fact, often misinterpreted inside jokes (**Study I**, Siibak & Murumaa, 2011), a part of privacy-maintaining strategy called social steganography (boyd, 2010) and a widely-practiced communication genre among youth.

Taking the idea of social steganography a bit further, an interesting strategy that could be called shift of responsibility came up in **Study I** (and somewhat in **Study III**). The students interviewed in **Study I** claimed that one of the dominant message types on social media is humorous messages. However, there is no one universal way how to interpret jokes, and it was noted that such communication on SNS often has double meanings, where the receiver is responsible for the decoding and “final meaning”. This strategy can be illustrated with a comment on Facebook, e.g. “you look so ugly on this photo. JK [just kidding], no really :)”. There are many possible ways to encode and decode such a message on SNS (Figure 3):

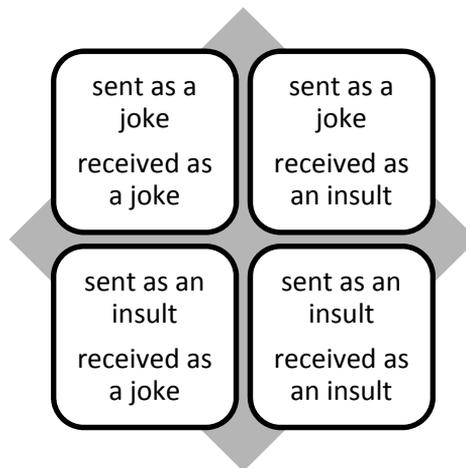


Figure 3: Different possible ways of encoding and decoding a message on SNS

The upper left possibility is a great case of social steganography (boyd, 2010) where the sender and receiver encode and decode the message similarly, but surrounding others may not, the meaning can remain “hidden” and offer some privacy. The option in the bottom right corner is usually a straightforward conflict, sometimes resulting in “drama” (Marwick & boyd, 2014). The

remaining two possibilities are what could be called shift of responsibility – the decoder is “responsible” for the meaning. The young participants in **Study I** revealed that negative comments are usually accepted and taken as mockery because in their descriptions of communication between friends, they described compliments and reassurance of social bonds that is encoded in malicious language and needs to be decoded in reverse (hence a form of social steganography). Even if the sender of negative comments had sincerely meant every word, it might be interpreted as a reverse message (accepted and commented with a “:D :D Oh shut up, you are :D”), to which the original sender can answer with a sentence that goes along with the reverse meanings game. The interviewees in **Study I** found that taking malicious comments as a joke is a form of ego protection.

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this work was to explore the perception of imagined audiences on social media, focusing on the experiences of the most active users – young people – and members of the social media audience who are often considered to be nightmare readers by youth – their teachers. I also aimed to study what kind of social media literacies are used by users on SNS, how the young people and the educators perceive their own audiencehood on social media platforms and how it all relates to social media literacies.

I chose to frame my studies using Giddens's (1984; 1979) structuration theory, to make sense of the very dynamic perceived rules and norms, resources and practices in social media based communication. Many questions arise: e.g. how are people navigating the context collapse of SNS? How and when (if it does) will a structure or a system change or shift? One of the central concepts of structuration theory is a system – broadly, a set of normalized social practices that are constantly being reproduced and reinvented by the agents (Giddens, 1984). From **Study I, III and V** we can see that these “sets” of norms differ to a great degree and are often clashing in online settings. The “nightmare readers” for young people, those who usually represent a different generation and system – those who hold power over them like teachers, university admissions committees, future employers, etc. – often maintain systems that are not accepted and do not mirror the ones relevant to young people. In structuration theory, agency is characterized by an innate ability to imagine different outcomes (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015), which can bring change and restructuring. Indeed, the young envision different realities, construct new norms and practices for potential future worlds. For example, an interviewee in **Study III** said that when he runs for president in the future, he will be expected to have compromising, personal and intimate material up in the digital sphere, so he would be perceived as a real person and not a robot.

What about the present, though? People perceive many institutions and people as a potential threat to their privacy, and paradoxically, at the same time express trust in the very same actors and feel they have nothing to hide (Murumaa-Mengel, Laas-Mikko & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014). Most online communication involves a risk to one's privacy: when the disclosed information falls into the wrong hands, or is seen by the “wrong eyes” – nightmare audiences. Why do people agree to disclose so much sensitive personal information in a society that constantly stresses the importance of privacy in public discussions but at the same time does not structurally support informational privacy?

First and foremost, to maintain and develop friendships, one needs to disclose personal information (boyd, 2014; Marwick, Murgia-Diaz & Palfrey, 2010; Larsen, 2007) and with augmented reality that means online and offline. Contributing to the maintenance of a “connected presence” (Licoppe &

Smoreda, 2005) enables people to stay in touch and serves as a reaffirmation of social bonds (Smith, 2014).

Secondly, from a utilitarian perspective, the perceived trade-off in making personal data available in exchange for using a service for free is very appealing. Younger people in particular are accustomed to such market-driven transaction-based logic, actively sharing and liking commercial pages on Facebook, blogging in order to attract advertisers and sponsors, etc. In **Study I**, for example, the Businessman user type did not stir any ethical or moral debate among the participants; such a user type's overall online practices were not condemned by the students. This neutral stance could be explained by the fact that the young might have perceived the practices of the Businessman as a win-win situation.

If we compare two contradictory views, or normalized social practices (Giddens, 1984; Wiggins & Bowers, 2015), on disclosing information online – limitation versus liberation – the older generations seem to favour the former (**Study V**) and, as mentioned above, the young showed some signs of internalizing the latter (**Study I**). Interviewed teachers voiced the opinion that social media is a public place and communication that takes place there should be restricted and restrained (by means of self-censorship and the intervention of others). At the same time, interestingly, the findings of **Study V** suggest also that social media platforms are mainly associated with one's spare time activities by the teachers, and hence, they are reluctant to share personal information with their students, nor are they eager to communicate with them on Facebook outside school hours. In other words, there was a double standard among the teachers in the sample and a failure to recognize and acknowledge the youth's agency – they did not want their students to intrude in their social media activities as these were considered to be private; however, monitoring their students' profiles was not considered a breach of students' privacy.

The young looked at the subject differently and redefined the structure and the system in their own way. Communication and sharing information on social media can be compared to keeping a personal diary, making a phone call to a friend (Solove, 2007), or a glass-walled bedroom (Pearson, 2009). Additional metaphors include likening communicating on social media to taking a ride on a bus and chatting with a friend. There are always those ready to eavesdrop as it is a public place, but most people seldom do listen in, as they are busy with their own lives. Some are not listening to your conversation because they are having their own conversations; some are plugged into their own audio worlds; some listen in only for a second, find nothing of interest and move on. Pretending to not listen or ignoring the conversations as a social norm of respect can be an “act of ‘giving someone space’” (boyd & Marwick, 2011: 25). Of course, some people do proverbially sit forward in their seat and “enjoy the show”, maybe even join the conversation. People riding on a bus are usually fully aware of others and sometimes censor themselves (e.g. they do not use full names, soften their voice, avoid some topics, etc.) but in the heat of the moment, still disclose a lot of personal information about themselves and others. Older adults often

seem to be more concerned (on the bus and on social media) about the spread of information and the potential damage it can do when nightmare audiences gain access to it, but young people laugh and chat and make rude comments in spite of it being a public place. In some cases, young interviewees expressed an attitude that seemed to expect understanding, a sort of camaraderie from others, even when they have managed to make a gaffe online (**Study I, Study III**). It can be decoded temporally as well – young people are interested in the present (“nothing to hide right now”), while the older adults are worried about the future (“something to hide tomorrow”). The expectation of forgiveness may be unfounded, as “forgiveness has moved out of theological arenas into self-help books, therapy sessions, neurology labs, twelve-step programs, and personal and social aspirations. It has not, however, moved online” (Ambrose, Friess & Van Matre, 2012: 3).

The best examples of the lack of forgiveness come from instances of massive public online shaming. Usually, cases where anonymous masses of internet users start a witch hunt out of all proportion revolve around people who have breached some perceived norms or social practices or accepted repertoires of structure and agency. Which norms and values are being reproduced in such shaming cases? What is the “crime” that started off the online shaming? In the cases of Justine Sacco and Stacy Snyder (Ronson, 2015), it was black humour, perceived by some as insensitive and not suitable for public sharing. Yet such a proscription seems out of place when we consider how internet culture and the emergent norms and practices in attention economy embrace borderline jokes (Laineste, 2013) that aim to make the audiences gasp.

The online shaming cases appear to spring from the older systems that have rather different normalized codes of conduct, punishing people for their wrongdoings, seeking justice and reparation. In a closer look, though, it seems that the aim of such massive establishment of existing norms is usually not the reproduction of a social system, but rather a form of lynch-mob entertainment. “We’ve sleepwalked into creating this surveillance society where we were tearing each other apart for nothing,” said Jon Ronson, author of *So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed* in an interview (Newman, 2015). Following that thought, we could ask what role technology, the socially mediated publicness, plays in system reproduction. “Technology from a strictly Giddensian viewpoint cannot be an agent, and can only exhibit ‘structural properties’ when utilized as a resource in social practice by human agents,” noted Rose & Jones (2005: 22). Although it deviates from the Giddensian train of thought, it can be argued that technology has a form of mediator-agency as an enabler, the structural capability to make a difference. When people are acting in huge groups, feeling separated by a screen and thus somewhat anonymous, their agency is diluted, even attributed to the technology. Knowledgeable reflexivity that is the foundation of the transformative capacity of competent actors (Giddens, 1984) is an important aspect that can bring more balance to the system. Knowledgeable reflexivity is also the core of most literacies.

5.1. Audience awareness as a part of social media literacies

Literacy is not just a shield that protects against risks, which have been a focal point of this thesis. Literacies are also positive, e.g. the ability to communicate and choose wisely, to engage with audiences and enhance one’s opportunities for success in the area of attention economy (Goldhaber, 1997; Litt & Hargittai, 2016b). Furthermore, the norms are different among different groups, for example, if young people follow the norms (e.g. positive and polite) of the teachers in SNS communication, they may enter into conflict with their peer group (being “other”, “like a teacher”). They may start or engage in a counter-practice of malicious back-handed compliments (**Study I**) or “drama” (Marwick & boyd, 2014), which reconstructs and rearranges the structures on a more broad level (e.g. common practices of online trolling, borderline jokes and witty sarcastic back-and-forth).

Audience awareness literacies, I suggest, are a part of social media literacies and stem from Rheingold’s (2010) network awareness. According to my studies and previous work by distinguished scholars, it includes the following skills and knowledge (Figure 4):

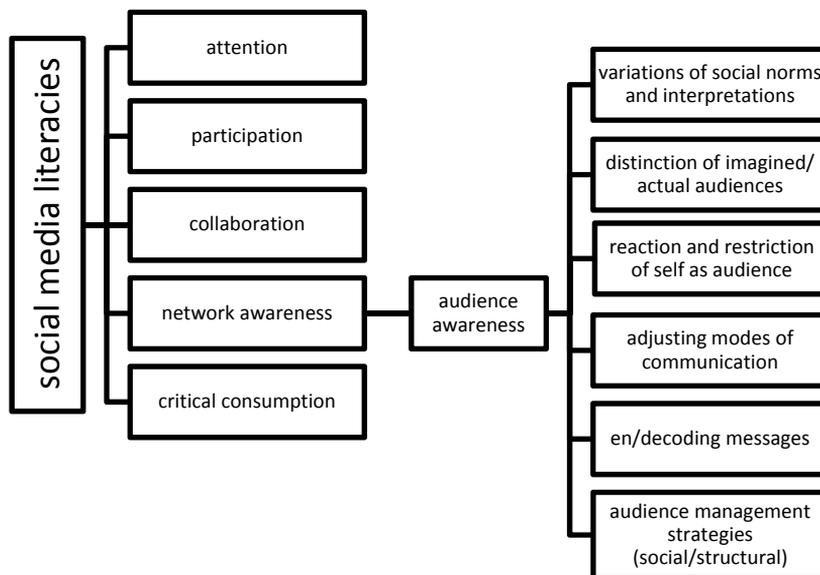


Figure 4: Suggested structure of social media literacies (Rheingold 2010) and audience awareness (author’s contribution)

As a disclaimer, I will point out here that we could draw many linking arrows between the elements on Figure 4, as they are heavily intertwined and many audience awareness elements are simultaneously elements of attention, critical consumption, participation, etc. First, an important part of audience awareness

is literally **being aware of different audiences and their shifting norms, values and possible interpretations** of texts on SNS. Some users are “giving up” on imagining their audiences in a way – as Litt and Hargittai (2016a: 8) have pointed out, many SNS users are “more focused on what they were sharing than with whom they were sharing” where the abstract imagined audience is blurred out and lost in the user’s imagination. Zizi Papacharissi (2011: 308) wrote that “the multiplication of social audiences does not *imply* [emphasis in the original] a lost sense of place, but does necessitate performances that are more aware, so as to make sense to a variety of audiences.” For example, teachers need to be aware of students’ perceptions of SNS as just another place for being social, as “most teens are not compelled by gadgetry as such – they are compelled by friendship” (boyd, 2014: 18), although teachers’ own perception of SNS may be of a public space for positive self-presentation. Or vice versa – students should look at different messages that are typical for young SNS users through the eyes of a grandmother or a recruiter from abroad. **Distinction of imagined and actual audiences** (and ideal and nightmare readers within them) is an important ability, which requires people to be aware of such notions, thus having the necessary vocabulary to think about the subject and practice the “reflexive form of knowledgeability” that Giddens (1984) spoke of.

This brings us to the part about audience awareness literacies – **reaction and restriction of self as audience**. It binds together the reflexivity about whether and how to react to others’ information and when not to react. Some users, for example, “relish the opportunity to eavesdrop” (boyd and Marwick, 2011: 24) and try to decode messages that are clearly not for them, but “for the most part, many young people see such messages as none of their business, choosing to ignore them. Similarly, plenty of teens believe that just because a message can be seen doesn’t mean that others should be looking. They expect people to ignore what’s not meant for them” (*ibid.*). The idea that a written word and public communication does not necessarily have to be restrained, that the audience is forgiving and shares a sense of camaraderie of audiencehood seems to be a residual element of online culture, especially when considering the perceptions of young people. For example, boyd and Marwick (2011: 21) have written that the young participants of their studies differentiate “normal and creepy” behavior and expect the first.

Audience awareness is also about **being able to choose between different modes of communication that are available** – a private blog can be great for airing anxieties and emotions, but a Twitter account with 10,000 followers needs a recontextualization of the text. The legibility of the text can be about **encoding and decoding of the messages**, knowing about the general mechanics of the processes and the multifaceted nature of online audiences, including “being an audience” (part of audience awareness). For example, the young expressed a highly sophisticated comprehension of certain kinds of code words and phrases that would help them to recognize possible online perverts (e.g. “do you have a webcam” and “sponsorship”) (**Study I, Study III**), or simply when they were not the target audience of a message and thus do not pay much

attention to the encoded message. Lastly, **the knowledge and use of audience management strategies** is the ability to navigate in these environments and understand the possibilities and risks involved (technical aspects, skills to modify these environments). In the following section, I will describe some of the constantly developing strategies that are being used to manage different audiences in SNS and enable users to protect their privacy to some extent.

5.2. Audience and privacy management strategies

SNSs offer many ways to control the flow of one's information, often via public-private modifiable settings, possibility to create different lists of contacts, to review tagged photos and posts, etc. Sometimes the service providers even try to spare the user from the hassle of organizing people into lists, as with Facebook smartlists. Such attempts are sometimes perceived as too great an intervention with people's social interactions and relationships. For example, De Wolf and Pierson (2012) found that the perception toward the smartlists was especially negative, because the lists "were perceived as too large, not always correct, and not relevant". Boyd and Marwick (2011) have pointed out that most young people are not convinced that Facebook's modifiable privacy settings will actually help them control how information flows, as content can leak in many ways (through mutual friends; parents spying on them; replicability of communication on SNS, etc).

One possibility to control and guide one's online identity is to disclose (semi-)false information about oneself. As Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum (2013) have turned attention to, there are applications and programs that allow users to selectively hide information even from the platform providers (e.g. FaceCloak). The possibility for fluid identities is problematic and structurally not supported currently. Tech giants like Facebook and Google are pushing for the prevalence of one-identity web where a person uses their given name across platforms and brings all their contacts with them. These corporations' services "present a hard, dichotomous approach to online identity: anonymous and authentic" (Ruch & Collins, 2011), with the latter being "real" and thus the positive one of the pairing. For example, Schmidt (2014: 6) has noted that in Twitter, the "idea of authenticity ... is widely shared, and fake accounts are seen as a transgression of communicative expectations". Fluid identity, first hailed as game-changing opportunity offered by the internet – to experiment with different identities online, executing personal agency to the fullest – has now transformed into the discourse of deceitful inauthenticity. Of course, there are platforms that embrace identity play, such as Tumblr, 4Chan, Second Life, etc. and enable the practice of polyvocality, that Kenneth J. Gergen (1999: 27) described as "dramatic expansion of the range of information to which we are exposed, the range of persons with whom we have significant interchange, and the range of opinions available within multiple media sites" and saw as making us "privy to multiple realities". In polyvocality, the individual has the right to

send messages that are sometimes contradictory, to change opinions and not care about the fact that all of these alternate messages are available to different members of audiences. But the megaliths of the online environment, the ones that have the highest user numbers and have embedded themselves into everyday practices and even language (“to google someone”, “Facebook me!”), are nudging us towards single-sign-in, one-identity-per-face augmented reality. In fact, the “authentic” one identity is preventing people from being truly authentic, as authenticity lies in mosaic pieces. Gergen (2000: 29) was right about people’s “fashioned” behaviour: “firm here and soft there, commanding and then obedient, sophisticated and then crude, righteous and immoral, conventional and rebellious. For many people, such chameleon-like shifts are now unremarkable; they constitute the normal hurly-burly of daily life”. Fifteen years later, these chameleon-like shifts are difficult to embody when contexts and audiences have merged and blurred and are digitally recorded.

Often, it is easier to hide the meaning of the message than to restrict certain readers from seeing it in the first place. Social steganography is an interesting strategy where hidden messages are sent in plain sight, passing messages that elude the watchful eyes of nightmare readers (boyd, 2014; boyd, 2010). Inside jokes and obfuscation of personal data (Nissenbaum, 2015) is an important and, in many degrees, widely used strategy. Reference code (Hall, 1980/2008) and the perception of the context (boyd, 2008) provide a key for interpreting the message in the preferred meaning structures. As a rule, the target is not named in the message and arrival of the message is marked by a response, a comment or “like” or a personal message (Murumaa & Siibak, 2011).

Additionally, shift of responsibility is a sub-strategy of social steganography that I noticed the participants describing in **Study I**. This strategy often frees the sender of responsibility, as the decoder is perceived as accountable for the meaning; ambiguous use of words and an absence of body language make the decoding a difficult process. As there is no proof of an offence, the message is open for plausible deniability (boyd & Marwick, 2011), e.g. text enclosed in quotation marks can express very inappropriate and discriminatory (such as race, gender or religion) content but the youth in **Study I** believed that a person making the post does not hold responsibility for it because they are not the authors but merely distributors and mediators (Murumaa & Siibak, 2011).

These strategies can be mapped (Figure 5) on two axes, based on my studies (**Study I**, **Study III**, **Study V**) and previous works by other scholars (e.g. Vitak *et al.*, 2015; De Wolf & Pierson, 2014; Oolo & Siibak, 2013; Lwin, Li & Ang, 2011; Janisch, 2011): social and structural (boyd & Marwick, 2011), and preventive and corrective (Lampinen *et al.*, 2011). The exact placement of each strategy is often context-specific and, fitting the structuration theory, social and structural simultaneously. Because of the dynamic nature of the internet, the lists of strategies presented on Figure 5 are non-exhaustive.

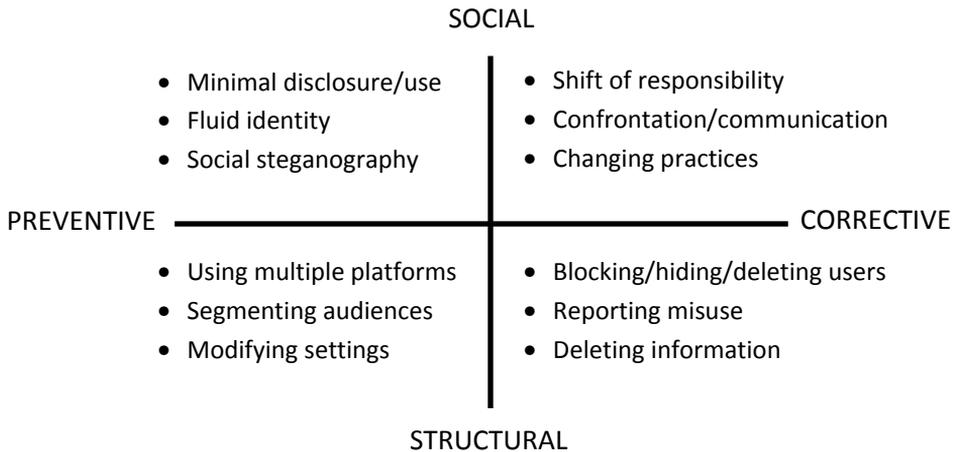


Figure 5: Different audience management and privacy-protection strategies

Preventive social strategies are of a proactive nature and usually related to limiting the information about oneself (fluid identity, disclosing false data, minimal disclosure) or the meaning of messages (social steganography). “Encoding content, subtweeting, and otherwise engaging in social steganography offers one strategy for reclaiming agency in an effort to achieve privacy in networked publics” (boyd, 2014: 69). Boyd goes on to emphasize that especially younger people have embraced the idea of limiting the access to meaning (not the content itself) as a powerful privacy-enhancing tool. **Preventive structural strategies** are related to making use of the technical, structural possibilities proactively, such as using multiple platforms for different audiences (e.g. Facebook and Snapchat), applying privacy settings available, grouping of people within contacts’ list and security software, etc.

Corrective social strategies are reactive by nature, for example, when a problem has occurred, a person can confront the offender, talk to someone about the problem to seek advice (Vandoninck, d’Haenens & Segers, 2012) or change their behaviour and practices. Shift of responsibility can be seen as corrective social strategy, too, as it is expected after a (problematic) message has been sent. **Corrective structural strategies** are broadly about reporting and deleting information that is perceived not relevant or problematic at a certain time.

I agree with David Buckingham (2006: 268) who, in talking about literacies that are needed to navigate online spaces, says that it “entails an awareness of the ways in which users gain access to sites, how they are addressed and guided (or encouraged to navigate), and how information is gathered about them”. So, for example, I suggest that ICT education in schools should turn even more attention to teaching these structural strategies and knowledge. Furthermore, I believe that social strategies that are more abstract and context-specific but make us more “fluent” in social media literacies should not be left mainly up to peer-to-peer learning. Schools, too, can help the students (and teachers) to

practise the “reflexive form of knowledgeability” that is at the heart of being (social) (media) literate.

5.3. Practical implications and recommendations

Teachers have historically been perceived as role models for the young (Lumpkin, 2008), near-ideal citizens. At present, society seems sometimes even frightened of teachers having genuine relationships with students, including sharing personal aspects of their lives (Kist, 2008) as teachers are expected to behave like educators twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Estonian teachers interviewed in **Study V** seem to be historically traditional in that sense, valuing professional pride and having confidence in their understanding of societal norms. In actuality, these norms are not shared by all, as SNS brings together many practices and value systems. Being aware of multiple realities and a wide range of perceptions could decrease the possibility of potential conflicts on SNS. In addition, it is worth stressing that teachers can present themselves through Facebook as individuals who function outside of the classroom in social situations and thus have a positive influence on students’ motivation and participation (Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2009).

Traditional authority-based learning has declined in recent years, as a more collaborative approach is finding support (McCaleb, 2013; Beetham & Sharpe, 2013). In this light, it is easier for the educators to give up control and the duty to monitor, call to order, and mediate the use of social media for specific students. Mutual online surveillance or “sousveillance” (Mann, Nolan & Wellman, 2002; Bossewitch & Sinnreich, 2012) seems to be the new norm; but at the same time, people have to learn how to look away at certain moments and to respect privacy boundaries set by other people, even if they differ from one’s own. In addition, under the present understanding of digital and social media literacies and education, the educators are generally expected to discuss, raise questions and learn with the students. The teachers of **Study V** seemed to be torn between the discourses of ICT-superior “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) and “ignorant, careless youth”. The former is often based on technical skills, but digital literacies consist of social skills as well. The “ignorant youth” thought pattern is mostly based on the perceived violation of social norms. One again, it is worth stressing that social norms are increasingly blurred in global digital settings. As I saw from **Study I** and **Study V**, there is common ground in perceptions about netiquette and rules of conduct on SNS; the participatory approach can help to map such ground in school settings as well.

In fact, the notion of “ignorant youth” has some justification, as adolescents are experimenting with the world and trying to figure out what works for them and what does not. Audience awareness and social media literacies are also about how to act as audience, what we should react to or turn a sort of blind eye.

The findings of my studies (especially in **Study III**) indicate that legislators, parents and educators should also consider changing how online threats are

communicated to children and teens. For example, at the moment, “stranger danger” is often based on the fear that one cannot see with whom one is communicating online, and deception and lying about “true” identities are the main threat. Young people mostly repeat the stereotypes of online predators, familiar from news stories (the case of the Spanish girl in Estonia or the *To Catch a Predator* TV programme in the US) and awareness campaigns (“think b4 u post”) because “people tend to assess the relative importance of issues by the ease with which they are retrieved from memory – and this is largely determined by the extent of coverage in the media” (Kahneman, 2011: 8). Livingstone (2014: 16) has noticed similar patterns: “mentions of strangers referred to experiences learned of second hand – originating in parental warnings or cases highlighted by the mass media or used by schools for digital safety training”. Awareness campaigns often lack variety in their messages, repeating over and over again the importance of staying away from online predators and keeping one’s information safe, because “once it’s out there, it’s there forever”. The latter, by the way, is not necessarily true in the direct sense, as “85% of content disappears in a year and ... 59% disappears in a week, signifying a decrease in the lifespan of online content” (Ambrose, 2013: 369).

Several perceived stereotypical characteristics of an online pervert (**Study III**) were problematic, considering some of the empirical evidence available. First, study participants usually perceived the pervert to be noticeably older, although international studies indicate that up to 90 per cent of sexual solicitations are made by peers and young adults (Wolak *et al.*, 2006). Secondly, the pervert is often seen as an anonymous stranger, although research has shown that the majority of harassment victims know their perpetrators in person prior to the offense (Choo, 2009; Wolak & Finklehor, 2013). Thirdly, as Kahneman (2011: 138) noted, “our expectations about the frequency of events are distorted by the prevalence and emotional intensity of the messages to which we are exposed”, so media coverage of cases has great influence on our perceptions. The media scurry that surrounded the case of the “Spanish girl” has left the impression that online perverts are foreigners who speak another language. There are several problems with this specific perception: what is seen as flirtatious in one culture might be perceived as harassment in another (Constine, 2011; Ingalls, 2011); with the maturation of online translation programs and websites, the belief that foreign language can be a tell-tale sign of a pervert is extremely misguided; not all Estonian speakers are harmless “smooth talkers” (**Study I**), some of them are criminal sex offenders. And, more importantly, should the perpetrator not match the perception, and be less “other”, a young person might not regard the harmful actions to be dangerous and downplay the harassment.

As we see from **Study III**, young people often already know how to identify a pervert. The youths in my studies described how adult men often approached younger girls on SNS bluntly offering sponsorship in exchange for sex as though such an act would be a mundane internet routine. So, instead of being deceitful and lying, in line with the common perception, the perverts were often

actually quite frank about their motives. Interviews with the police indicate that most victims are adolescents who knowingly meet adults for sexual encounters (boyd & Marwick, 2009). When awareness campaigns and initiatives are designed, we must accept that it is the children themselves who are experts in their own lives and not the adults (Bond, 2013).

All these perceptions and misconceptions are a part of what I see as audience awareness of social media literacies which, indeed, develop mostly in informal learning settings, but to which formal education system, academia, government, media and other various stakeholders are expected to make a contribution.

People's digital and social media literacies can be updated and developed but it will never be enough. Whether acknowledged or not, people in Estonia and in many other countries saturated with modern technologies are in a state of constant stress – they believe their privacy is threatened by various parties but have to manage in everyday life where their information is constantly accessed, collected and used. Nowadays, personal responsibility is often stressed and the public has accepted the discourse – people frequently think that the responsibility for personal data on the internet falls on the individual. For regulators and legislators, it is easy to see the individual as responsible (for literacies as well as privacy) and people have adopted this point of view. The problem is that we often lack complete information about technologies which themselves are very often technically complex and non-transparent regarding data collection, processing and distribution practice and its possible consequences. Parallel to increasing people's digital skills, the state and corporations need to take steps to support the individual by making their information use more transparent and helping people to understand more clearly whether and to what extent they need to fear that information will be disclosed. These responsibilities need to be shared in order to be adequately managed.

Qualitative research methods and more specifically, creative research methods have offered the opportunity to explore in depth how people manage and give meaning to certain aspects of their augmented online+offline life. It should also be acknowledged here that qualitative research has been critiqued on a fundamental level for lack of concise guidelines, subjectivity and “anything goes” mentality (Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2002). Creative research methods have been criticized for “naïve empiricism” (Buckingham 2009: 635) and the fact that the empirical material gathered through such an approach cannot be taken as objective documentation of reality. I agree with Andy Bennet (2003), who notes that it is now relatively taken for granted among researchers that the notion of “objectivity” is itself an ideological construct. Alternatively, we could collect data quantitatively from a representative sample but lose the nuances and rich insights (Awan & Gauntlett, 2013) that qualitative research offers.

I feel that many aspects of the present study deserve further research – e.g. what is the relationship between media literacies, digital literacies and social media literacies, how much of it is overlapping, which characteristics are universal and which are intrinsic to specific literacies. However, in my mind,

the topic of online predators is the most crucial one where additional research is needed. Because the strategies that are used by young people to cope with risks online are developing rapidly, academic research, policy makers and educational practitioners need to be as up to date as possible. The topic definitely warrants further research: one possible focus is the prevention of online crimes and protection from online threats, as young people often have insight into the subject that grown-ups lack.

6. CONCLUSIONS

My conclusions are based on three main research questions:

I **How to study social media audiences using an approach that is consistent with the notion of active audiences?**

- Researching perceived audiences can be a vague and abstract subject for participants, and creative research methods offer a great possibility to concretize the topic and “hook the thought” onto something more comprehensible (**Study I**). On the other hand, if we need information about something specific (e.g. a certain type of nightmare readers, **Study III**), creative research methods can help to “zoom in” on the phenomenon and its intricate details (**Study II**).
- Creative research methods complement the concept of active audiences, as the participant is given editorial control and can embody the role of a producer – creatively producing material and participating in the reception process as well, helping to decode the messages (**Study I, Study III**). There needs to be full awareness of the fact that all parties to the research process take away something from the research process. For researchers, it is predominantly data. For participants, the research process can continue well into the future – long-term processing and internalization of aspects of the studies, increased literacies in focal areas, etc. (**Study II, Study IV**).
- Creative research methods can successfully be used in research that takes place in groups (e.g. focus groups, **Study I, Study II**) and also in one-to-one approaches (in-depth participant interviews, **Study III, Study IV**).
- I found the linear creative research design to best suited to the purpose (**Study I, Study III**). It allows participants to first create and then explain, and thus have time to process the subject, rather than making use of the parallel creative process, where a participant is creating and explaining simultaneously. The research process, of course, can and should thus take more time (especially if a period of time is left between creating materials and interpreting interviews, as in **Study III**).
- Sensitive research topics (like thoughts on online predators, **Study III**) can benefit from the use of creative research methods, as the participant can direct the discussion via the visual expression of their thoughts and instant answers are not expected as the participant can first sort out their thoughts without much disturbance (**Study IV**).
- In such studies, the role of a researcher should transform from an expert to a friendly adult (**Study IV**). In qualitative research (especially when employing creative research methods), a degree of “insiderness” can prove to be valuable due to the value of shared experiences and the cultural interpretation. Nevertheless, analysis of created materials should be a process that the participant is actively engaged in (**Study II**).

II How do social media users construct their social media audience?

- The information that is shared on SNS varies greatly – some content is humorous, some informative, some utilitarian and some emotional (**Study I, Study V**). The young tend to disclose more diverse information (**Study I**), while the teachers perceive their educator’s role as they cross over from classroom to SNS and therefore disclose more information that could be called “hidden pedagogics” and which I informative (**Study V**).
- This coincides with the general perceptions of imagined audiences on social media – the young perceive and imagine different types of people (**Study I**) and norms (**Study I, Study III**) to exist, while teachers tend to imagine a much more restricted audience and repertoire of accepted practices on SNS (**Study V**).
- Ideal audiences are, in brief, “users like me” (**Study I, Study III, Study V**). The characteristics of members of ideal audiences and their expected behaviour is often mirrored on the values and practices of oneself (**Study I**), which is different for each actor. Common shared positive traits of SNS communication that could be attributed to the ideal audiences are moderate use and sensible information disclosure (**Study I, Study V**). It is worth noting that “moderate” and “sensible” mean very different things to people of different cultures, backgrounds, histories and generations.
- Nightmare readers’ common characteristics, on the other hand, are “users unlike me”. Young people perceived their typical nightmare readers to differ from themselves based on age, sex, sexuality, nationality, cultural and upbringing (**Study I, Study III**).

III RQ3: What characterizes audience awareness literacies of social media users?

- The positioning of oneself in the communicative act (talking at someone, talking with someone, creating meanings together, looking away at certain points) has much to do with generational reference points – the ones who have lived in a world where information was forgotten (e.g. teachers of **Study V**) can never fully understand the ones who have mostly grown up digital (**Study I, Study III**). Young people have to manage a tangle of digital footprints and reclaim their right to be forgotten, which takes extra effort. Teachers seem to speak mostly about responsibility; youths speak mainly about camaraderie.
- Students and teachers (**Study I, Study V**) both feel relatively confident in their social skills aspect of digital literacies (less so in their technical knowledge). The belief of perceiving social norms correctly is often misguided, as both evaluated the others’ practices to be inadequate and errant to a certain extent. During the interviews, both actors revealed involuntarily the gaps in their technical skills, as well as in audience awareness literacies (**Study I, Study V**), potentially causing a serious discord in opinions.

- On the other hand, teachers (**Study V**) and students (**Study I**) share some perceived general rules of conduct on SNS: moderate use, discreet sharing, selective friending and disclosing neutral or positive (professionally relevant) information.
- The young and their teachers use a wide variety of strategies that allow them to cope with the context collapse – young people’s strategies are sometimes very complex, playing with hidden and double meanings (**Study I, Study III**), thus proving the public outcry about new generations not being able to read between the lines (as media consumers were supposedly adept at doing in Soviet times) not to be true.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Kujutletavate auditooriumite tajumine sotsiaalmeediapädevuste osana

Doktoritöö “Kujutletavate auditooriumite tajumine sotsiaalmeediapädevuste osana” koosneb sissejuhatavast tekstist ja viiest omavahel seotud artiklist, mis käsitlevad peamiselt seda, **kuidas inimesed tajuvad ja konstrueerivad sotsiaalmeediasuhtluses oma kujutletavaid auditooriume ning millised on kesksed sotsiaalmeediapädevused, mis seonduvad erinäoliste auditooriumitega suhtlemisega (Uurimus I, Uurimus III, Uurimus V). Lisaks on doktoritöö eesmärgiks panustada valdkonna metodoloogilise mõtte arengusse, analüüsides kvalitatiivsete loovuurimismeetodite kasutamise võimalusi ja riske veebiauditooriumite uurimisel (Uurimus II) ning mõtestades uurija võimalikke rolle tundlike uurimisteede käsitlemisel (Uurimus IV).**

Sotsiaalmeedia ja sotsiaalvõrgustikud on käesolevas kontekstis käsitletud kui veebipõhised platvormid ja teenused, mis võimaldavad inimestel end unikaalsete (pool)avalike profiilide kaudu esitleda, tekitada teiste kasutajatega võrgustikke ning tarbida, luua ja suhestuda sisuga, mida teised kasutajad nendel platvormidel loovad või vahendavad (Ellison & boyd, 2013). Viimastel aastatel oleme olnud tunnistajateks mitmetele probleemsetele juhtumitele, mille keskmes on väärettekujutus oma sotsiaalvõrgustikes saadetavate sõnumite auditooriumist ehk vastuvõtjatest. Justine Sacco⁵ ja Lindsey Stone⁶, Vinni-Pajusti Twitteriskandaal⁷ ja Sergei Menkovi YouTube'i postitus⁸ – need on vaid mõned juhtumid, mis on näidanud selgelt sotsiaalmeedia ja seal toimetavate tohutute erinäoliste aktiivsete auditooriumite võimu (Ronson, 2016).

Keskne probleem, mida selliste tehnoloogia poolt vahendatud suhtluse negatiivsete näidisjuhtumite puhul märkame, on kontekstide kokkuvarisemine (boyd,

⁵ Sacco säutsus Twitteris mitmetitõlgendatava sotsiaal- ja enesekriitilise mõeldud nalja, mis oli suunatud tema väiksearvulisele valitud jälgjaskonnale. Kuna säut oli avalik, liikus see palju suurema auditooriumi silmade ette kui algselt plaanitud. Suur osa laiemast auditooriumist ei dekodeerinud nalja naljana, vaid ignorantse ja rassistliku väljaütlemisena. Tagajärjeks oli üks suurimaid avalikke häbistamisi lähiajaloo (Ronson, 2015).

⁶ Stone postitas Facebooki siseringi naljana mõeldud foto sellest, kuidas ta sõjamemoriaali juures teeb teavitussildil olevale infole vastupidist. Kui postitus muutus viraalseks ning jõudis plaanitud laiemale auditooriumi ette, kaotas Stone töö ning sattus massilise *online*-ahistamise ohvriks (Ronson, 2016).

⁷ Abiturient säutsus Twitteris kriitilise kommentaari koolinäidendi kohta, seda nägid ka košmaarsete lugejatena käsitletavat õpetajat ja kooli juhtkonna liikmed. Kooliõpilast karistati kooli maine rikkumise eest ning ühiskondlikult algatas see juhtum laiemat diskussiooni sõnavabadusest ja avaliku-privaatse tajumisest sotsiaalmeedias (Laks, 2016).

⁸ Põhja päästkeskuse rühmapealik Menkov postitas YouTube'i video vabariigi aastapäeva paraadilt, jäädvustades videole ka iseenda ropu keelekasutusega mõnitava teksti. Menkov vallandati video laiemal avalikkusel ette jõudmise järel (Eylandt, 2016).

2008) – olukord, kus eelnevalt eraldiseisvate kommunikatsioonisituatsioonide kontekstid ja osalised on veebikeskkondades sulandunud. Sotsiaalmeedias saadetud sõnumi auditooriumiks võivad olla kas üheaegselt või ajalisest kontekstist üldse lahtihaagituna nii endised kui praegused sõbrad ja romantilised partnerid, kolleegid, sugulased, aga ka potentsiaalsed tööandjad ja kliendid, võõrad, suurkorporatsioonid jne, jne. Teatud mõttes on selline kontekstide kokkuvarisemine tinginud massilise pideva ühisjälgimise, omnoptikoni (Linna Jensen, 2010; Rosen, 2004), kus „kõik jälgivad kõiki“, olles indiviidina samaaegselt ise jälgija ning jälgitava rollis.

Sotsiaalvõrgustikes enda ja teiste kohta infot jagades ja avaldades keskenduvad inimesed sageli enda “kujutletava auditooriumi” (Marwick & boyd, 2011) ootustele ja eeldatavatele reaktsioonidele. Kujutletavate lugejate puhul kipub sõnumi saatja eelkõige keskenduma “ideaalsele lugejale”, see tähendab vastuvõtjatele, kes jagavad sõnumi saatja poolt tajutud norme ja väärtusi, temaga samu teadmisi ja huumorimeelt. Sageli aga on saadetud sõnumitele ligipääs ka „košmaarsetel lugejatel“ (Marwick & boyd, 2011), kes on saatjast väga erinevad ning ei pruugi maailma mõtestada sarnasel viisil ja seega dekodeerivad saadetud sõnumeid ka oodatust erineval viisil.

Digipädevused, mis on käesoleva töö keskseks kasutatavaks mõisteks, on aina komplekssemas ja infost küllastunud päris- ja virtuaalsfääri põimivas liitreaalsuses (Jurgenson, 2012) kasvava tähtsusega. Digipädevused hõlmavad endas palju erinevaid teadmisi ja oskusi, sealhulgas ka spetsiifilisemalt sotsiaalmeediapädevusi (Livingstone, 2014; Rheingold, 2010). Howard Rheingold (2010) nimetab sotsiaalmeediapädevuste ühe olulise osana teadlikkust võrgustike toimimisest, ehk nagu nii mõnedki teised digipädevuste uurijad (nt Vanwynsberghe, Boudry & Verdegem, 2011; Jenkins *et al.*, 2009; Buckingham, 2007) rõhutab ka tema enam võrgustike tehnoloogilise struktuuri ja produktiooniloogika mõistmise vajalikkust. Minu töö keskendub enam suhtlusvõrgustike sotsiaalse struktuuri ja inimese agentsuse (Giddens, 1984) mõistmise ja mõtestamise vajalikkusele. Laiem teoreetiline lähtekoht käesolevas töös ongi Anthony Giddensi strukturatsiooniteooria (1984), milles nähakse inimese agentsust ja erinevaid ühiskondlikke süsteeme ja struktuure omavahel läbi põimununa. Tehnoloogia kontekstis tähendab see, et tehnoloogia on inimeste poolt loodud, muudetav ja modifitseeritav, kuid oma antud hetkel kehtiva pidevalt reprodutseeritava struktuuriga mõjutab omakorda inimeste käitumist ja otsuseid. Seega on sotsiaalmeediapädevused ühest küljest inimeste enda vastutuse ja agentsuse väljendus, kuid teisalt kehtestab struktuur inimestele teatud igapäevatehnoloogiatega seonduvad praktikad ja käitumisjuhised, võimalused ja piirangud.

Doktoritöös keskendus kahele grupile – noortele, kes on sageli aktiivseimad sotsiaalmeedia kasutajad ning tehnoloogiaga seotud suurtele muutustele avatud (Robards, 2013; Livingstone *et al.*, 2011); ning õpetajatele, keda võib käsitleda ka noorte jaoks košmaarsete lugejatena ja kelle poolt tajutud normid ja väärtused ning elukogemused pärinevad peamiselt digiühiskonna-eelsest ajast (Siibak & Vittadini, 2012), mistõttu võivad oluliselt noorte omadest erineda.

Nagu öeldud, on košmaarsed lugejad sellised auditooriumi liikmed, kellele saadetud sõnum ei ole tegelikult suunatud ja kel sageli on info saatja üle ka mingisugune reaalne või sümboolne võim. Noorte puhul on sellisteks lugejateks näiteks: vanemad, õpetajad, politsei, tulevased tööandjad ja erinevate vastuvõtukomisjonide liikmed. Teisalt võivad õpilased olla ka õpetajate jaoks košmaarsed lugejad, kuna õpetaja rolliga kaasnevad kõrgendatud ja igal ajahetkel kehtivad ootused õpetaja tegevusele ja iseloomule (Lumpkin, 2008; Foulger *et al.*, 2009), laienedes kahtlemata ka sotsiaalmeedias tegutsemisele. Seega on oluline uurida, kuidas erinevad inimesed liitreaalsuses koos tegutsevate ideaalsete ja košmaarsete auditooriumitega toime tulevad, milliseid strateegiaid kasutavad avaliku ja privaate eristamiseks.

Uurimuses I keskendusin gümnaasiumiealiste noorte kujutletavate auditooriumite tajumisele ja konstrueerimisele, viies läbi kaks fookusgruppi (n=15), mille arutelude ja kasutatud loovuurimuslike projektiivtehnike keskmes olid noorte üldised sotsiaalmeedia kasutuspraktikad ning netikett ja tüüpilised Facebooki kasutajad. Uuringu ühe tulemusena selgus, et tüüpiliste košmaarsete lugejatena nimetasid uuringus osalenud noored õpetajaid ning „välismaiseid perverte“ (eelkõige *online*-ahistajaid, kelle tegevuse eesmärgina tajuti seksuaalse peibutamise või ärakasutamise ettevalmistamise (ing. k. *grooming*) ja valetamise abil laste seksuaalset ahistamist). Sellest leiust ajendatuna keskendusin **Uurimuses V** just õpetajate vaatele – neljas fookusgrupis jagasid Eesti õpetajad (n=21) oma kogemusi ja arvamusi seoses veebiauditooriumide, netiketi ja õpetaja-õpilase suhetega sotsiaalmeedias. **Uurimuses III** viisin läbi kvalitatiivse uuringu, kus palusin gümnaasiuminoortel joonistada netiperverti. Seejärel viisin kümne noorega läbi süvaintervjuud, kus palusin neil kirjeldada oma kogemusi veebi-ahistajatega ning sedagi, milline on nende kujutlustest üks „tüüpiline netipervert“ ja mida ta teeb.

Uuringute I ja III ettevalmistamisel seisin silmitsi tõsiasjaga, et tajutavate auditooriumite uurimine võib osutuda keerukaks, kuna tegemist on teemaga, mis on inimeste mõtetes ähmane, piiritlemata ning kohati väga abstraktn. Kasutatud loovuurimismeetodid (analüütiline ülevaade **Uuringus II**) aitasid osalejate jaoks teemat konkretiseerida (fookus-gruppides kasutatud joonistus-ülesanne, kus paluti kujutada erinevaid kasutajatüüpe, **Uuring I**), nähtuse detailidele mõelda (individuaalne, süvaintervjuule eelnev joonistusülesanne, kus paluti kujutada tüüpilist netiperverti, **Uuring III**) ning võimestada osalejaid, väljendamaks erinevatel viisidel tundliku uurimisteeduga seonduvaid mõtteid ja kogemusi (**Uuring III, Uuring IV**).

Metodoloogilise panusena olen doktoritöö raames läbi viidud uuringute põhjal analüüsinud, millised on kasutatud loovuurimismeetodite võimalused ja kitsaskohad (**Uuring II**) ning milline võiks olla uurija roll tundlike uurimisteedade käsitlemisel (**Uuring IV**). Loovuurimismeetodid, mis kuuluvad kvalitatiivsete visuaalsete uurimismeetodite laiemasse raamistikku, on andmekogumisviis, mis on segu traditsioonilistest kvalitatiivsetest meetoditest, projektiivtehnikatest ja loovatest ülesannetest. Meetodi puhul palutakse inimestel rakendada oma mängulist või loomingulist tähelepanu millegi loomisele ning loodu mõtesta-

misele. Sellisel viisil on võimalik saada mitmekülgset informatsiooni, mis traditsiooniliste kvalitatiivsete uurimismeetodite kasutamisel jääb kättesaamatuks. Meetod on üles ehitatud eeldusele, et kui indiviidil on aega, et ise midagi luua, siis jõuab ta paremini oma mõtetes ja tunnetes selgusele ning näeb asju uues valguses (Gauntlett, 2011). Eriti innukalt on lähenemist kasutatud tundlike uurimisteede puhul ning laste ja noorte eagrupi uurimisel. Tundlike uurimisteede puhul on **Uuringu IV** järgi mõttekas modifitseerida uurija rolli eksperdist “sõbraliku täiskasvanu” rolliks. Kogu loovuurimismeetodeid kasutav uuringuprotsess on koostõisema iseloomuga, kusjuures uurija ei anna loodud materjalidele oma – tihti meelevaldseid – tähendusi, vaid kasutab interpreteerimisel võimalikult palju osalejate abi, andes selle kaudu uuritavatele hääle.

Doktoritöö raames läbi viidud uuringute empiiriliste tulemuste põhjal saab välja tuua, et sotsiaälvõrgustikes jagatav info on väga erinev ning ei ole võimalik anda täpseid, tervet põlvkonda iseloomustavaid kirjeldusi. **Uuringutest I ja V** nähtub, et tajutud normid ja netikett võivad ka nii erinevate gruppide puhul nagu õpetajad ja õpilased omada teatud ühisosa. Nii näiteks pidasid intervjueritud noored ja õpetajad ühtemoodi positiivseks sotsiaalmeedia kasutuseks pigem tagasihoidlikke kasutuspraktikaid, nähes peamise privaatsust kaitsva strateegiana enesetsensuuri ja valikulist info jagamist. On oluline märkida, et tagasihoidlik infojagamine võib olla erinevate gruppide jaoks väga erineva tähendusega. Ka ideaalsed auditooriumi liikmed olid mõlemas grupis üldjoontes “kasutajad nagu mina”, avaldub tugev usk sellesse, et info vastuvõtjad on saatjaga sarnased nii oma põhiväärtustelt kui kasutuspraktikatelt. Tajutud košmaarseid auditooriumi liikmeid konstrueeriti peamiselt vanuse, soo, seksuaalse sättumuse, rahvuse ning kultuurilise ja eluloolise tausta erinevuste kaudu (eelkõige **Uuring I, Uuring III**). Nii näiteks tajusid **Uuringus III** osalenud noored netiperverti vanemaelise mehena, kes on tõenäoliselt raske lapsepõlve ja koleda välimusega, mitte-heteroseksuaalne välismaalane ning täiskasvanuna sotsiaalselt ebaküps. Mitmed omadused on pärit meedialugudest, mis rõhutavad perverdi erinevust noorest endast, ning võib märgata, et stereotüüpses kujutamises toovad noored välja seda, mis aitab *online*-ahistajat kergesti ära tunda. Tugevate meediastereotüüpide ja -narratiivide levikuga, mida kinnitavad tihti ka netiohutuskampaaniad, säilib aga oht, et laps või noor ei pruugi oma ahistajat ahistajana defineerida, sest too ei vasta karikatuursele stereotüübipõhisele profiilile.

Oluline on meeles pidada, et see, mis on vanemate jaoks tõsine oht ja probleemne käitumine, on noorte jaoks mõnigi kord hoopis võimalus. „Ära räägi võõrastega“ ei ole paljude noorte jaoks adekvaatne soovitus, sest „võõras“ võib olla homme juba mängukaaslane, sõber, armastatu, oluline huvialane kontakt või inimene, kes oskab anda infot põneva teema kohta. Vanemlikust kontrollist üsna vabad veebikeskkonnad on noorte jaoks olulised just piiride katsetamisel, keelatu proovimisel. Seetõttu rääkisid ka **Uuringu III** noored sellest, kuidas potentsiaalselt ohtliku inimesega jututoas või personaalsetes sõnumites rääkimine on üks meelega hõlmatuse viis – seda tehakse mõnikord lihtsalt selleks, et meelega hõlmatult alastipilte nuruva „pervo“ üle naerda või näha

üldisemal tasandil, kuidas erinevad inimesed üldse suhtlevad. Ei tohi ka unustada, et lapsed ja noored rakendavad mitmeid strateegiaid, kuidas *online*-riskidega toime tulla: koodsõnade ja -lausete ära tundmine („sponsorlus“, „do you have a webcam?“ jne), ebameeldivate tüüpide blokeerimine, negatiivsest kogemusest sõbrale (harva ka vanemale inimesele) rääkimine või pervertide avalik häbistamine sotsiaalmeedias.

Õpetajate ja noorte suhtumise juurde naastes – märkame sarnasuste kõrval ka fundamentaalseid erisusi. Mõned erinevused ei sõltu tegelikult domineerivast meediumist – näiteks on noored huvitunud rohkem olevikust (pole midagi varjata praegu), vanemate generatsioonide esindajad aga tulevikust (pole midagi varjata homme); kommunikatsioonikultuur on noorte puhul avatum, muretum ning õpetajate puhul enam kontrollile ja piirangutele orienteeritud. Vanema-ealised ei mõista täiel määral nooremate poolt omaks võetud uusi norme (**Uuring V**) ning sildistavad noori ühelt poolt „võimekateks diginoorteks“, kelle oskustega võistelda ei suudeta, kuid samaaegselt ka „hukkaläinud nooruseks“, kelle veebikäitumine tekitab vanemate põlvkondade esindajate hulgas hämmingut.

Noorte sotsiaalmeedia kasutust iseloomustab **Uuringu I** ja **Uuringu III** järgi õpetajatest enam märksõna „mitmekülgsus“. Noorte jaoks on tehnoloogia poolt vahendatud sotsiaalsus normaalsus, mille juurde kuulub ka enda kohta erinäolisema info jagamine. Seetõttu kasutavad noored sotsiaalmeediat mitmekülgsemalt kui õpetajad. Viimaste sotsiaalmeediakasutust raamistab nende õpetaja-*roll* – mistõttu pannakse põhirõhku hariva sisu jagamisele, ning paljude uuringus osalenud õpetajate jaoks oli esmatähtis sotsiaalmeedia informatiivne funktsioon. Sarnaselt võib märgata, et noored tajuvad sotsiaalmeedia auditooriumite ja eksisteerivate normide erinäolisust tugevamalt. Õpetajate kirjeldustes (**Uuring V**) oli vähem variatiivsust, mistõttu olid ka uuringus osalenud õpetajate arvates sotsiaalmeedias aktsepteeritud suhtlusrepertuaarid ja praktikad piiratumad. Õpetajaroll iseenesest kirjutab teatud mõttes ette konservatiivsema ja vastutustundliku, kontrolli olulisusel põhineva suhtumise. Noorte arvamustes (**Uuring I**) näeme märke sellest, et nende digitaalne jalajälg sisaldab palju enam informatsiooni ja ka probleemseta tajutavaid katsetusi identiteedi ja sotsiaalsete rollidega, millega seonduvalt ootavad ja eeldavad nad auditooriumi liikmetelt teatud mõttes kamraadlust ja oskust teatud infole mitte tähelepanu pöörata. See sotsiaalmeedia auditooriumitega seotud pädevus ei ole siiani laiemates aruteludes oluliselt tähelepanu pälvinud.

Kui aga soovitakse privaatsust, rakendavad nooremaealised vanematest generatsioonidest enam erinäolisemaid privaatsust kaitsvaid või säilitavaid struktuurseid, sotsiaalseid ja psühholoogilisi strateegiaid, nagu näiteks:

- privaatsusseadete modifitseerimine endale sobivaks;
- mitme identiteedi kasutamine, (osaliselt) valeinfo avaldamine, „andmete hāgustamine“ (Nissenbaum & Brunton, 2015);
- info eemaldamine, kasutajate blokeerimine ja raporteerimine, kommunikatiivsete strateegiate kasutamine, kui informatsioonilise privaatsuse rikkumise taga on keegi teine;

- sotsiaalne steganograafia – avalikult salasõnumite saatmine, mille puhul peab vastuvõtja sõnumite dekodeerimiseks omama „õiget“ interpretatiivset võtit või koodi (boyd, 2010), mis annab võimaluse peita tähendust, mitte informatsiooni ennast;
- vastutuse nihe, kus vastutus dekodeerimisel tekkinud tähenduse eest lükatkse täielikult sõnumi vastuvõtjale – nii näiteks võib esitada solvanguid naerunägedega kirjatult ja vastuvõtja vastutab, kui ta seda dekodeerib solvanguna. Teine näide on diskrimineerivate tekstide esitamine jutumärkides, jättes seeläbi endale taganemistee, vabanduse, et tegutseti vaid vahendajana (**Uuring I**).

Nii noored kui õpetajad on üldiselt oma sotsiaalmeedia kasutamise oskustes üsna kindlad, eriti sotsiaalsetes pädevustes ja netiketi ning erinäoliste auditooriumite adekvaatses tajumises. Võrreldes kahe grupi arvamusi enda ja üksteise praktikatest ja pädevustest, on näha, et need on vastukäivad ning ei ole sageli teiste tegelikkust peegeldavad ja arvestavad. Kõikides uuringutes esines näiteid sellest, kus õpetajad ja õpilased ei ole teadlikud mingitest sotsiaalvõrgustiku tehnilistest nüanssidest või peavad ekslikult oma referentsgrupi norme kõigi poolt aktsepteerituks. Ereda näitena võib tuua juhtumi **Uuringust V**, kus õpetajad arutlesid selle üle, kuidas naissoost õpilased olid postitanud sotsiaalmeediasse endast paljastavaid pilte ning õpetajad sekkusid, juhtides tähelepanu materjali probleemsele. Noorte jaoks aga on selliste piltide postitamine tavapraktika ning kui košmaarne lugeja kommenteerides nähtamatust nähtavaks muutub, võib see tekitada arusaamatust, viha ja tunnet, et õpetaja on rikkunud õpilase privaatsust ning sekkunud eraasja.

Doktoritöö tulemustena võib välja tuua mõned olulised auditooriumite tajumisega seonduvad laiemad, alaoskusteks ja -teadmisteks jagunevad sotsiaalmeediapädevused:

- teadlikkus auditooriumite erinäolisusest: sealhulgas ideaalsetest ja košmaarsetest, realiseerunud ja potentsiaalsetest, homo- ja heterogeensetest ning sellest, mil määral võivad netikett, normid ja võimalikud interpreteerimisviisid neis erineda;
- oskus ja teadlikkus sellest, millised on erinevad strateegiad auditooriumideni jõudmiseks, aga ka auditooriumide ligipääsu piiramiseks teatud infole;
- erinevate kommunikatsioonirepertuaaride ja -platvormide vahel valikute tegemine, vastavalt oma sõnumi saatmise eesmärgile ja auditooriumile;
- iseenda rolli mõtestamine erinevate auditooriumite ja massilise ühisjälgimise osalisena, mis kätkeb endas erinevate normide samaaegse eksisteerimise tunnustamist ning võimet teatud hetkedel mitte reageerida ja mitte osaleda, astuda auditooriumi liikme rollist teadlikult välja.

Nende pädevuste arendamine on kahtlemata iga inimese agentsuse küsimus ja vastutus, nagu praegu domineeriv mõtteviis sätestab, kuid on oluline rõhutada, et indiviidi jaoks on see üle jõu käiv ülesanne. Tehnoloogial on teatud mõttes transformatiivne võimekus, vahendaja-agentsus, mis muudab kasutajate mõtte-

mustreid, praktikaid ja sotsiaalseid struktuure. Hariduses saab käsitleda senisest enam infotehnoloogia sotsiaalseid aspekte, mõtestada inimeste tegutsemist tehnoloogiast küllastunud kaasajas läbiva tuumteemana. Avalikes teavituskampaaniates on võimalik tuua stereotüüpsete narratiivide (nt „ära räägi võõraga“) kõrvale teisi alternatiivseid sõnumeid, mis võtavad arvesse noorte tegelikke kogemusi ja mängulise riskantse käitumise olulisust noortekultuuris. Sotsiaalmeediapädevuste arendamisse saavad ja peavad panustama erinevad sotsiaalsed ning haridusstruktuurid ja -süsteemid ning avaliku, vaba-, ja ärisektori mõju-pooled.

PUBLICATIONS

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Additional publications, related to the PhD thesis:

Murumaa-Mengel, M. (2016). 100 sekundi video: meedialood kallutavad netiperverdi kuvandi äärmusesse [100 second video: Media stories push the perception of online pervert to the extreme]. *Estonian Public Broadcasting Science Portal Novaator*, novaator.err.ee, November 18. Retrieved from: http://novaator.err.ee/v/teadlase_100_sekundit/d882df81-af24-44a6-873e-d9fa8aac4ff8/100-sekundi-video-meedialood-kallutavad-netiperverdi-kuvandi-aarmusesse

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- Murumaa-Mengel, M. (2014). Loovuurimismeetodid [Creative research methods]. In K. Rootalu, V. Kalmus, A. Masso & T. Vihalemm (Eds.). *Sotsiaalse analüüsi meetodite ja metodoloogia õpibaas [Study materials for the methods and methodology of social analysis]*. University of Tartu. Retrieved from: <http://samm.ut.ee/loovuurimismeetodid>
- Murumaa-Mengel, M. (2013). Tänapäeva paratamatus – eraasju aetakse hiigel-auditooriumi silme all [Private matters in front of massive audiences – contemporary inevitability]. *Estonian Communication Journal Kaja*, 4, 8–10.
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Murumaa-Mengel, M. (2016). 100 sekundi video: meedialood kallutavad netiperverdi kuvandi äärmusesse. *ERR teadusportaal Novaator*, 18. november. Veebis: http://novaator.err.ee/v/teadlase_100_sekundit/d882df81-af24-44a6-873e-d9fa8aac4ff8/100-sekundi-video-meedialood-kallutavad-netiperverdi-kuvandi-aarmusesse

Siibak, A. & Murumaa-Mengel, M. (2016). Noored otsivad võimaluste- ja riskiderohkes sotsiaalmeedias oma kohta *Eesti noorsootöö ajakiri MIHUS*, 19, 4–6. Veebis: <http://mitteformaalne.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/MIHUS19.pdf>

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