



**TURUN
YLIOPISTO**
UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

AFFECTIVE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Engagements with Networked
Parenting Culture

Mari Lehto



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ABSTRACT

Social media have changed the ways in which we connect and experience the world around us. The article dissertation explores the affective, ambiguous power of social media parenting culture in contemporary Finland. The study asks how motherhood is lived, experienced, and felt through social media. The study demonstrates how networked media engages mothers affectively and produces new knowledge about parenting and the growing impact of social media.

The dissertation is a qualitative, multimethod study built around cultural theory, affect inquiry, feminist media studies, and internet research. The dissertation contains an introduction and four different case studies. The methodological body of the study is developed around an analytically selective ethnographic approach named 'reparative flow'. Reparative flow is an experimental, ethnographic approach that brings together two methodological principles, namely the concept of 'flow' as a contextually situated means of moving through, and understanding digitally saturated lived experiences, and 'reparative reading' that opens up a space for surprise and positive affect.

The four case studies presented in the form of research articles focus on social media-specific phenomena in the Finnish context, including the figure of a bad mother in mommy blogs, the affective dynamics of social media breastfeeding discussions, affective practices of influencer mothers in social media work, and the affective everyday encounters with parenting content. In first two articles, the research material consists of different kinds of online content, specifically blogs, discussion forum comments, and Instagram posts. The final two articles move the methodological focus into the level of experience, particularly in-depth interviews and diaries of social media use.

Through four individual case studies, the dissertation argues that it is the diverse, complex, and ambiguous affective intensities of social media, saturated by cultural norms of motherhood, that make networked parenting culture engaging. By researching the traces, signs, and interpretations of these lingering intensities, it is possible to better understand the experiences of mothers living in contemporary datafied culture. Moreover, the findings of the study indicate that while the social media influencers and mommy bloggers engage their followers through different affective tactics, the affective appeal of platforms is key to the dynamics that guide our attention and connect users together. The study further argues that the multi-layered affective experiences, rhythms, and intensities of networked parenting

culture addressed in this dissertation speak of something more than social media motherhood. They communicate the ways social media shape our ways of feeling.

By focusing on lived experience and affects, my study challenges the macro-structural accounts concerning networked lives and point to the need to focus on qualitative methodological granularity, which provides deep, rich, and contextual insights into the dynamics and impacts of social media. Understanding how affects are circulating in networked media also furthers our understanding of how affect works and what it does in our encounters with the world. By analysing the ambiguous stories of everyday networked engagements, the study offers insight into one method of investigating the affective appeal of social media.

KEYWORDS: social media, affect, motherhood, digital culture

TURUN YLIOPISTO

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Sosiaalinen media on muuttanut tapojamme kommunikoida ja muokannut kokemustamme maailmasta. Artikkeliväitöskirjassa tarkastellaan sosiaalisen median ambivalenttia, affektiivista voimaa vanhemmuuskulttuurin näkökulmasta nyky-Suomessa. Tutkimuksessa kysytään, miten äitiyttä eletään, miten äitiys koetaan ja miltä se tuntuu sosiaalisessa mediassa. Tutkimuksessa selviää, kuinka sosiaalinen media sitouttaa äitejä affektiivisesti, ja se tuottaa uutta tietoa nykyajan vanhemmuudesta sekä sosiaalisen median kasvavista vaikutuksista.

Monimenetelmällinen, laadullinen tutkimus nojautuu erityisesti kulttuurintutkimukseen, affektitutkimukseen, feministiseen mediatutkimukseen sekä Internet-tutkimukseen. Väitöskirja sisältää johdannon sekä neljä itsenäistä tutkimusartikkelia. Tutkimuksen metodologisessa osassa esitellään etnografinen, analyttisesti valikoiva lukemisen tapa, jota kutsutaan *reparatiiviseksi flow'ksi*. 'Flow' viittaa paikantuneeseen tapaan tutkia digitaalisen aikakauden kokemuksia. Reparatiivisessa lukemisessa kekeistä on puolestaan avoimuus positiivisille affekteille ja yllätyksille.

Tutkimusartikkelit keskittyvät sosiaalisen median ilmiöihin, mukaan lukien huonon äidin figuuri äitiysblogeissa, sosiaalisen median imetyskeskustelujen dynamiikka, vaikuttajaäitien affektiiviset käytännöt sometyössä sekä affektiiviset kohtaamiset sosiaalisen median vanhemmuussisältöjen kanssa. Kaksi ensimmäistä artikkelia painottuvat verkkosisältöihin, kuten blogeihin, keskustelufoorumien kommentteihin ja Instagram-julkaisuihin. Kaksi viimeistä artikkelia siirtävät painopisteen kokemuksen tasolle: syvähaastatteluihin ja havaintopäiväkirjoihin sosiaalisen median käytöstä.

Tapaustudkimusten pohjalta tutkimus väittää, että sosiaalisen median affektiivisten intensiteettien monipuolisuus, monimerkityksellisyys ja ristiriitaisuus yhdessä äitiyden kulttuuristen normien kanssa sitouttavat äitejä verkon vanhemmuuskulttuureihin. Tutkimalla näiden viipyvien intensiteettien jälkiä, merkkejä ja tulkin-toja voidaan paremmin ymmärtää dataistuneessa nykykulttuurissa elävien äitien kokemuksia. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että vaikka vaikuttajat ja äitibloggaajat sitouttavat seuraajansa erilaisilla affektiivisilla taktiikoilla, sosiaalisen median alustojen affektiivinen vetovoima on avain dynamiikkaan, joka tuo käyttäjät yhteen, mutta voi myös ajaa heidät erilleen. Väitöstutkimus osoittaa, että digitaalisen vanhemmuuskulttuurin monikerroksiset affektiiviset kokemukset, rytmit ja intensiteetit kertovat muustakin kuin äitiydestä: ne heijastavat tapoja, joilla sosiaalinen media muovaa tunnekokemuksiamme.

Väitöskirja haastaa makrotason suuret kertomukset datakulttuurista tutkimalla kokemuksia ja affekteja. Tutkimus keskittyy mikrotason monimerkityksellisiin tunteuksiin ja painottaa laadullista metodologista tarkkuutta. Lähestymistapa tarjoaa syvällistä ja kontekstoitua tietoa sosiaalisen median dynamiikasta ja vaikutuksista. Affektien kiertoa sosiaalisessa mediassa tutkimalla väitöskirja selvittää, miten affektit toimivat ja mitä ne tekevät kohtaamisissamme maailman kanssa. Tutkimuksessa monimerkitykselliset digitaalisen arjen tarinat tarjoavat ikkunan, jonka kautta voi tarkastella sosiaalisen median affektiivista vetovoimaa.

AVAINSANAT: sosiaalinen media, affekti, äitiys, digitaalinen kulttuuri

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A good scholarship is hard work, but one does not accomplish it alone. In my experience, the best research is done thinking together with other scholars, supported by family and friends. This work was made possible because of the talent, solidarity, and help of so many wonderful people in my life.

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In Turku, September 2021

Mari Lehto

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List of Original Publications

This dissertation is based on the following original publications. All four articles are published in academic peer-reviewed publications. Please cite the original place of publication when referring to them. The previously unpublished chapters (pages 2–82) can be read before or after the articles, but I recommend that the reader familiarize themselves with the individual studies before moving to Chapter 4, which discusses the findings.

- I Lehto, Mari (2019) Bad is the new good: Negotiating bad motherhood in Finnish mommy blogs. *Feminist Media Studies*.
- II Lehto, Mari (2019) Bare flesh and sticky milk: An affective conflict over public breastfeeding. *Social Media + Society*.
- III Lehto, Mari (2021) Ambivalent influencers: Feeling rules and the affective practice of anxiety in social media influencer work. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*.
- IV Lehto, Mari and Paasonen, Susanna (2021) ‘I feel the irritation and frustration all over the body’: Affective ambiguities in networked parenting culture. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*.

Introduction

*So, I left my fading life
I left my hands with an open door
Left it like an open sore
I couldn't stop the wind from flowing*

– Jenny Wilson, *Like A Fading Rainbow*, 2009

Throughout this project, I have returned to the clattering sounds of Swedish singer and songwriter Jenny Wilson's album *Hardships!* The album title refers to the struggles of motherhood, and on the cover, Wilson is dressed in black, wielding an old shotgun. On my favourite song, *Like A Fading Rainbow*, her voice recounts the deliriously liberating feeling of having time for yourself. "For me", Wilson later wrote on her Facebook page, "being a parent to small children never was anything "natural and lovely". I more often felt like a misfit, and at times it was a fight for survival."

This dissertation tackles the affective power of online parenting culture and investigates how motherhood is lived, experienced, and felt through social media in contemporary Finland. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the project has its origins in my own experiences as a new mother back in 2011 when I, much like Jenny Wilson, also found the gap between parenting ideologies and lived experience considerable. Living in a digitally-saturated, internet-mediated society, I had been immersed in social media for some time before starting to call it research (see Markham, 2020: 12) but was still utterly unfamiliar with parenting discussions before actively seeking them online.

While enjoying the posts of certain wonderfully sharp mommy bloggers and laughing at the hilarious performances of those trolling on parenting forums, most of the social media parenting content made me feel exceedingly ambivalent. There were days when social media provided the perfect distraction or made me feel connected, but time and again I would feel anxious, irritated, fed up, or downright furious. It is fair to say that despite my persistent efforts to maintain an ironic distance to the heated turmoil and mundane boredom of online motherhood, I still found myself deeply affected. The budding researcher in me was also curious. What is really happening here, and how can it be conceptualized?

To figure this out, I have spent several years investigating the impact of social media on maternal narratives and traced the experience of being connected and affected through digital parenting culture in the Finnish context. This dissertation is a multimethod study built around critical studies of digital media, motherhood, and affect. It produces a reflexive analysis of multiple modes of affective engagement and explores the cultural and political underpinnings of contemporary motherhood in networked media. Thereby it is not just a story about motherhood. More than anything it is a sinuous journey into the sticky rhythms of social media and the affective power and appeal of the “digital mundane” (Wilson and Yochim, 2017) situated within the broader context where network connectivity is more of a necessity than the kind of added experiential and communicative layer that it used to be (Paasonen, 2021: 9).

As I am writing this, we are a full year into the global coronavirus pandemic. As the social distancing measures have interrupted many face-to-face contacts, social media have rapidly become even more crucial communication tools for sociality, entertainment, (dis)information, and consumption. My research attends to this by regarding how networked media affects the ways in which we connect and experience the world around us and how we might conceptualize how social media feel. Affect circulates, produces value, drives political action, incites conflict, and reconfigures ways of doing and making sense of bodies, identities, and communities (Hynnä et al., 2019: 1), and tracking down these intensities is pivotal in order to understand what is going on with networked parenting culture and social media more broadly. Following a line of thought that individual affective experience cannot be separated from the social environment, my premise is that social media spaces might best be understood as ‘affect worlds’ where emotional forces prevail (see Berlant, 1997; Holzberg, 2018: 45).

My central argument is that it is the diverse, complex, and ambiguous affective intensities of social media, saturated by cultural norms of motherhood, that make networked parenting culture engaging. By researching the traces, signs, and interpretations of these lingering intensities, it is possible to better understand the experiences of mothers living in contemporary datafied culture. Moreover, I suggest that the multi-layered affective experiences, rhythms, and intensities of networked parenting culture addressed in this dissertation speak of something more than social media motherhood. They communicate the ways social media shape our ways of feeling and making sense of the world, and as such, point to the need to focus on a qualitative methodological granularity that provides deep, rich, and contextual insights into the dynamics and impacts of social media.

This article-format dissertation is composed of a thematic introduction (Chapters 1–5) and four peer-reviewed journal articles. The thematic introduction presents the main themes, defines the purposes of this research, explains the theoretical and methodological frameworks, presents the research articles, and discusses the findings

and conclusions. The research articles can be read individually, but together they form a cohesive understanding of how social media engage mothers affectively.

In Chapter I, I present the background and context of my study and introduce the research questions. I also provide a brief summary of the peer-reviewed research articles. In Chapter II, I discuss the theoretical framework and the key concepts of the dissertation. I also offer a literature review of the main theoretical debates and key concepts that inform the discussions presented in this work. The research is composed of various empirical studies that help me to contextualize contemporary motherhood and social media in general in accordance with relevant fields of research.

Chapter III begins by introducing of the theoretical-methodological principle that I call 'reparative flow' and then moves to reflect on the methodological choices of each article: what kind of research material was collected and how it was analysed, and the ethical decisions made during the research process. In Chapter IV, I present the key findings of the dissertation. Drawing together the most important findings and arguments, I highlight the points that I consider to be integral to drawing conclusions about the affective power of social media. Finally, Chapter V demonstrates how the articles collectively respond to the main research question. It ties together and extends the analysis and arguments made in the research articles. At the end, I also reflect on the merits and limitations of my work. The peer-reviewed research articles can be found at the end of the dissertation.

I Field of Research and Research Problem

In this chapter, I introduce the background and context of my work and the research questions that emerge from this field. Figure 1 (page 24) presents my research problem broken down into four specific research questions. I also present a summary of the peer-reviewed research articles.

1.1 Background and context

Remember when we were poking friends on Facebook and Instagram's photo format was limited to a square? Or when fashion bloggers hid their faces and online motherhood was all about mommy blogging? By tracing the experiences of being connected and affected through digital parenting culture in contemporary Finland, this dissertation maps into a specific time in internet history. During the past decade, social media have grown into a ubiquitous part of our daily lives, and their whole infrastructure and attention economy have shifted and transformed.

The services and platforms (and hardware and software) are constantly changing. The logic of updates is continuous, and thus the alterations are partly inconspicuous (Chun, 2017). While social media interface updates are usually met with resistance, the transformations that have taken place, for example, in five years can be difficult to track or even remember. It is safe to say that within a relatively short period of time, social media together with the spread of smartphones and the mobile internet have altered the everyday conditions of our lives and fundamentally transformed how sociability is organized and understood (Paasonen, 2021: 9). Social media are now intertwined with neoliberal capitalism and data surveillance, inciting both excitement and horror (Boyd, 2015: 2; West, 2019).¹ Consequently, research exploring how

1 During the first years of the World Wide Web (circa 1993–2005), advertisement-based services existed alongside and overlapped with applications of subscription and membership fees. A web “content producer”, a short-lived new media profession of the 1990s, involved writing articles and creating polls etc. with the aim of inviting users to spend time on the site in question. In contrast, in the course of the 2000s and the shift to Web 2.0 and social media, content production became the task of users themselves (Paasonen, 2018, 2021: 80). Vast amounts of data are now gathered automatically of users’

we interact and communicate in digital contexts has a significant place in the study of social phenomena (Mackenzie, 2018: 19).

‘Social media’ describes digital internet technologies that enable users to participate in social networking or create and share content. The term is a broad umbrella for all kinds of applications, business models, forms of entertainment, interaction, and ideologies, but as such technologies develop fast, the definition is comprehensive and vague by design (Boyd, 2015: 1; Burgess et al., 2017: 3; Lövheim et al., 2013: 28). While acknowledging the argument that all communication media are inherently social and the term ‘social media’ is the takeover of the social by the corporate² (Baym, 2015), in this dissertation, the notion refers primarily to social network sites such as Facebook and Instagram, online discussion forums, and blogs. During the time I have worked on this study, the ‘blogosphere’ has transformed from amateurish to aspirational, bloggers have turned into influencers, and online motherhood has grown more fragmented and platformed in different ways. My perspectives and methodologies have moved along with that.

Like much of the scholarship on mothers online at the beginning of the last decade, this research started as a study on mommy blogging. Mommy blogs are online platforms on which mothers write about pregnancy, motherhood, and parenting. These works, which explore cultural phenomena from the point of view of ‘insiders’, serve as personalized narratives, performative spaces, and self-reflective commentaries for both the bloggers themselves and their readers (de Laat, 2008; Karlsson, 2007; Kurtz et al., 2017: 3). In previous studies, mommy blogs have been described as radical acts (Lopez, 2009) and spaces of resistance and multiple subjectivities (Powell, 2010) that are motivated by feelings of isolation or experiences different from those encouraged in the media or in expert texts (Friedman, 2013; Taylor, 2016: 115). As such, peer support has been considered as one of their primary functions (e.g. Clennett-Sirois, 2013; Friedman and Calixte, 2009; Morrison, 2011; Webb and Lee, 2011). On the other hand, the term “mommy blogging” has been criticized for reinforcing women’s normative role as nurturers, forcing them into “digital domesticity” (Chen 2013: 511), and more recent studies on mommy blogs have explored the digital landscape of motherhood as both liberating and constraining (Abetz and Moore, 2018; Orton-Johnson, 2017; see also article 1).

everyday activities on social media. Platforms harvest personal data to target users with ads, and this data and predictions drawn from it is the product that is being sold (see e.g. Andrejevic, 2011, 2013; Gangadharan, 2012).

- 2 Nancy Baym (2015) discusses the conversion of social interaction into wealth for the few and argues the need to fight for media that help build better societies. According to Baym, the term ‘social media’ puts the focus on what people do through platforms rather than tackling the issues of ownership, rights, and power.

However, personal blogs that live on WordPress or Blogger have become less popular as people are publishing their content where conversations are happening — directly on social media platforms such as Instagram or YouTube. During the 2010s, the original focus of the blogs has transformed to a multi-platform, media-mix approach (see Abidin et al., 2020: 73-74), and the monetization of social media has had a profound effect on the blogosphere as a whole. Along with these developments writing about motherhood has shifted from free and affective labour (Terranova, 2000) to compensated affective labour, and it can be considered a form of entrepreneurial or freelance work operating within the digital economy (Mäkinen, 2020: 2). It is now common that mommy bloggers/influencers, while still proclaiming enjoyment in the processes of expressing themselves and connecting with other mothers, are sharing their stories for financial gain (Archer, 2019; Archer and Harrigan, 2016; Hunter, 2016).

The new buzzword ‘social media influencer’ has come to stand for the subset of digital content creators defined by their large engaged online following and distinctive brand persona (Abidin, 2015a, 2017; Duffy, 2020). Influencers exercise their power in social media strategically and for profit and attract a large, engaged following on their platforms of choice. Their content consists of the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, and they monetize their following by integrating commercial content into their social media posts. (Abidin, 2015a, 2017). While for mommy bloggers and family influencers, parenting-related issues are the primary content, this study is also concerned with influencer mothers for whom motherhood and family topics serve as ‘filler content’ (Abidin, 2017: 4). This is the case for many lifestyle influencers who started as mommy bloggers but widened their perspective as their children grew older.³ Furthermore, influencers who are primarily known for other things can still utilize motherhood as an essential part of their lifestyle brands (see Article 3).

The accelerated commodification has been characterized as “a beginning of the end for the mom blogosphere”, where independent content creators submit to the forces of the capitalist market (see Song, 2016: 46). It is evident that the ongoing developments intensify anxieties among their writers and readers about the nature of authenticity and digital labour (e.g. Cummings, 2019, Duffy and Schwartz, 2018). While these women chase professional goals that hold the promise of social and economic capital, the compensation is vastly uneven (Duffy, 2016). At the same time, the influencer industry is one of the rare fast-growing businesses where women dominate the arena. Fields of work seen as feminine often fail to register the levels of

3 Sometimes influencers’ children themselves become famous online. Abidin (2015b) defines micro-microcelebrities as the children of influencers who have themselves become microcelebrities, having derived fame from their well-known influencer parents.

value granted to traditionally masculine topics (Duffy and Hund, 2019: 4984; Levine, 2015), and while being recognized by corporations provides means of making money (Taylor, 2016: 124), commercial recognition can also make mommy bloggers and other influencers feel visible and appreciated (see Song, 2016: 46).

The change that occurs when writing about one's life is no longer merely a hobby calls for a comprehensive analysis of the complex and varied experiences of the content creators themselves (see Duffy and Hund, 2019; Song, 2016; also article 3 in this study). In the case of parenting influencers, it has been noted that as the number of readers increases, the narration of experiences easily turns into performances of aspirational motherhood (Hunter, 2016). Based on the examination of how the influencer mothers who participated in my research articulate their experiences, it appears that norms, negotiations and compromises concerning motherhood intensify and complicate the pressures of social media work (Article 3; also Mäkinen, 2018).

This study is interested in how motherhood is lived, experienced, and felt through social media from the point of view of the influencers, but also in respect of mothers who follow them and discuss parenting in social media (Articles 2 and 4). Mothers have a long history of using the web to discuss parenting practices, from emails, discussion groups, and online forums to social media platforms that offer the opportunity to share their own material and to respond to, curate, tag or share other people's content (Lupton et al., 2016: 734). These developments contribute to the broader datafication of culture, of the lives of the parents themselves as well as those of their children. It is worth noting that the possibilities not only for voluntary sharing one's data but also for the leakage and commercial exploitation of user data mark a departure from earlier online platforms that were available to parents. (Lupton et al., 2016: 730.)

The sharing of children's data (photos, videos, and stories) by everyday parents on social media has been analysed as a form of digital self-representation (Blum-Ross and Livingstone 2017; Tiidenberg 2015), as a mode of challenging norms of motherhood (Boon and Pentney 2015), as a way of giving and receiving peer support (Ammari et al., 2014) and as a privacy issue (Archer, 2019; Lipu and Siibak, 2019). Tama Leaver (2017: 8) has called for resistant practices to delimit the generation and sharing of data about infants, and arguing that influencers normalise the practice of sharing children's behaviour and photos online. Certainly, parenting influencers' visibility and assumed authenticity render them significant actors within this but as mothers of all kinds have become avid users of social media, sharing images and stories related to their children, sometimes from the first ultrasound scan onward, it is not always easy to determine who influences who (Archer, 2019).

It has been suggested that the historical silencing of maternal narrative and the fact that women are still overwhelmingly responsible for unpaid domestic work, as well as the emotional work at home, may explain why mothers blog and share children's stories and images in far greater numbers than fathers (Friedman, 2016, 2018:

170; Tiidenberg, 2015). This plays into the wider context of the intensive parenting culture that expects mothers specifically to devote large amounts of time and energy to their children (see Hays, 1996). While discussing parenting, my enquiry is situated in a setting in which knowledge about parenting fixes individual parents in distinct, binary subject positions along gendered lines (see Mackenzie, 2018: 58). In other words, within the gendered discourses of care, parenting is frequently understood as mothering.

In Finland, a Nordic welfare state with an extensive municipal maternity and child health-care system, children have a legal right to municipal day-care services. The Finnish parental leave system allows either the mother or the father to be released from work during the first year with the baby, and afterwards one of the parents can take unpaid childcare leave to look after their child until the child turns three. (Sevón, 2009; Sihvonen, 2020; Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2021). However, although in Finland gender-equality is encouraged, in heterosexual families, mothers still use the majority of the leave. Compared to the other Nordic countries, the development of individual parental leave rights for fathers has been slow (Gislason and Eydal, 2011), and most single parents are women (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2018; Lammi-Taskula, 2017: 89). It is evident that the cultural expectations of parenting in Finland still commonly favour mothers as the primary caregivers, and therefore the high social expectations are directed particularly towards them.

Online parenting discussions often turn into polarized debates (Article 2). It has been noted that while social media have increased mothers' opportunities to voice their experiences, the normativities of online debate contribute to a set of rivalries between mothering philosophies and practices (Abetz and Moore, 2018), and their force of repetition may create a heightened perception of division (Arnold and Martin, 2016: 4). Regarding that, it is important to note that neither 'mothering' nor 'parenting' are neutral terms that simply describe "what parents do as they raise their children" (see Lee, 2014: 9) and the narratives about networked media are not free of moral judgements. Rather, while parenting is discussed as a social problem and parents' behaviour is often blamed for troubles in society (Lee, 2014: 9-10), media technology—of networked media in particular—is continuously positioned as a threatening, evil force overriding individual and collective agency (Paasonen, 2021: 150). In particular, mothers' media technology use is an object of perpetual concern in Finnish popular journalism (Kaarakainen and Lehto, 2018; Kaarakainen, 2021).

I discuss the networked intensive parenting culture as social norms influenced by various ideologies that advocate time-consuming and devoted practices of parenting and especially mothering (Hays, 1996; Mäkinen, 2020: 2). This includes, for example, attachment parenting (Faircloth, 2014), risk consciousness (Furedi, 2011; Lee, 2014), and the importance placed on breastfeeding (Faircloth, 2014; Jung, 2015). These norms reflect the deterministic view of parents and outline expectations about how

they should raise their children (Lee, 2014: 10). Furthermore, the intensification of parenting is also a question of increased responsibility to gather as much knowledge as possible, and while practices of knowledge-intensive parenting in theory concern fathers too, it is still mostly mothers who are seen as responsible for making the right decisions (Hays, 1996; Mäkinen, 2020: 2). The potentially constant demands of digital and mobile media and the new always-connected workplace increase their workload (Schofield Clark, 2012: 215). This, together with zeitgeist diagnoses of the addictions, distractions, and boring qualities of networked media (Paasonen, 2021) calls for a more complex and nuanced analysis of networked cultures of mothering, a need that my study seeks to address.

I want to underline that this research is a very small-scale investigation on Finnish motherhood as one context of social media. Finland is a technologically advanced, internet-intensive country with widespread digital public services and online opportunities. Finns use by far the most mobile data in the world (Bell, 2020), and in 2021, internet penetration stands at 96% (Niinimäki, 2021). My study cannot, nor does it attempt to, make claims about social media use, Finnish mothers, or parents in general. Saying that, the lack of diversity concerning the participants is nonetheless obvious. Despite my efforts to recruit a diverse group of mothers, trans-parents and nonbinary parents are not represented in this study. This is unfortunate considering that public discussions concerning parenthood in social media and elsewhere are commonly set against a backdrop that still essentializes the roles of parents and that the popular understanding of parenthood is still deeply binary (Friedman, 2018: 172).

Furthermore, while the identity of the people discussing on anonymous forums (Article 2) is unknown, the participants of this study (Articles 1, 3, 4) are white, Finnish-speaking Finns of primarily Evangelical Lutheran background, and other cultural, ethnic, or religious groups are not represented in the case studies (cf. Alasuutari, 2020: 42). In part, this lack of diversity is related to Finnish society, which is more homogeneous than many others (Raento and Husso, 2002; Statistics Finland, 2021). Also, certain methodological choices, particularly the snowballing technique, produces similarity, and this will be further discussed in Chapter 3. I am aware that these limitations make it impossible to offer broader insights into how the affective engagements studied intersect with, for example, mothers' class, ethnicity, gender identification, and sexual identification.

In spite of these shortcomings, my analysis bears in mind the diversity of lived experiences. The research material is rich and granular, and I employ a critical close reading of the material in order to develop a deep understanding of the phenomena at hand. By telling stories of everyday networked engagements, my study offers insight into one method of investigating the affective power of social media.

1.2 Research questions

This article dissertation examines the ambiguous, affective power of networked parenting culture, asking *how affect drives mothers together and pulls them apart, and what affect does when circulating in social media*. The research problem is further developed into four specific research questions to help me work through how motherhood is experienced in the era of social media (Figure 1).

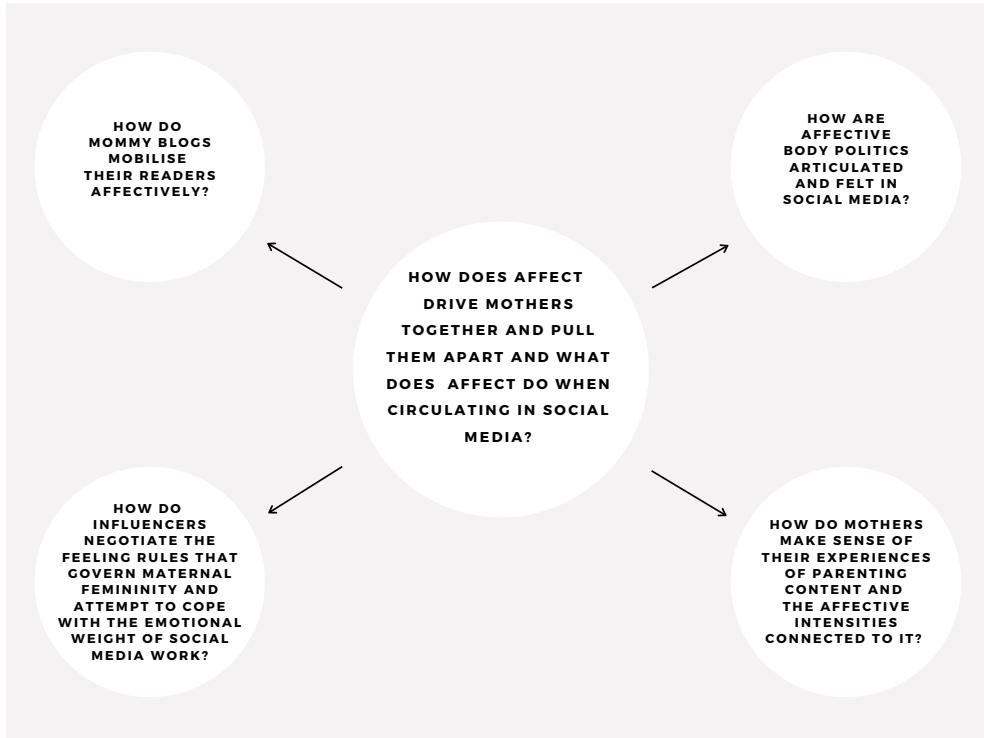


Figure 1. Research problem broken down to four specific research questions.

This dissertation is a multimethod study built around cultural theory, affect inquiry, feminist media studies, and internet research. The objective is to produce a reflexive analysis of multiple modes of affective engagement and to explore the cultural underpinnings of contemporary motherhood in social media in Finland. The case studies focus on social media-specific phenomena in the Finnish context, including the figure of a bad mother in mommy blogs, the affective dynamics of social media breastfeeding discussions, the emotional work of influencer mothers, and the affective everyday encounters with parenting content among mothers.

I argue that it is the diverse, complex, and ambiguous affective intensities of social media, saturated by cultural norms of motherhood, that make networked parenting culture engaging. By researching the traces, signs, and interpretations of these lingering intensities, it is possible to better understand the experiences of mothers living in contemporary datafied culture. By investigating modes of affective engagement, the study demonstrates how social media engages mothers affectively and produces new knowledge and deconstructs perceptions about contemporary parenting and the growing impact of social media. Moreover, the multi-layered affective experiences, rhythms, and intensities of networked parenting culture reflect the ways that social media shape our ways of feeling and making sense of the world. My study argues for the need to focus on a qualitative methodological granularity that provides deep, rich, and contextual insights into the lived experiences in datafied society.

1.3 Research articles

In addition to this thematic introduction, the dissertation consists of four peer-reviewed journal articles. The research articles can be found at the end of this dissertation. They are also introduced briefly below, but since Chapter 4 presents the findings made in the articles, I recommend the reader to read the articles before moving to Chapter 4.

Analysing four posts of two Finnish mommy blogs and their comments, the first article explores the affective power of a ‘bad mother’ figure in relation to the contemporary experience of parenting in Finnish settings. The article investigates how these popular blogs mobilize their readers through self-reflective yet ambivalent confessions and ironic criticisms of normative motherhood. I argue that while the emotional work of the mommy bloggers might not be able to dismantle the myth of the perfect mother, the figure of a bad mother can be seen as an attempt to make sense of the frictions and contradictions triggered by the exhausting nature of the gendered, intensive parenting culture. In this process, the figure of the bad mother transforms into a new ‘normal’, while the notion of motherhood remains both affective and polarized. Article 1 was published in *Feminist Media Studies* in 2019.

The second article is a case study that focuses on a social media debate over mothers nursing in public. By analysing Instagram posts and a discussion forum thread, this article explores the affective body politics involved in a short lived yet intense dispute sparked by a single photograph of a breastfeeding woman taken by a Finnish celebrity. It examines the power of hashtags and images in mobilizing motherhood as a site of political agency. Concurrently, it investigates how social media users negotiated the appropriate public presentations of the female body and how the celebrity’s gayness made him an object of negative affect. The analysis of the incident makes visible how social norms concerning motherhood and heteronormativity are articulated in social media. It also demonstrates how affect sticks to images, texts, and

bodies and becomes a binding force in social media discussions concerning them. The article argues that Instagram's hashtag practices facilitated affective engagement for those following #teriniitti. It further argues that the affective dynamics of the case demonstrate how affective intensities stick on gay bodies and lactating bodies as objects of disgust, fascination, and desire. Article 2 appears in a special issue on affective body politics in *Social Media + Society* in 2019.

Through in-depth qualitative interviews with four Finnish influencer mothers and online observation of their social media accounts, the third article asks how Finnish social media influencer mothers negotiate the feeling rules that govern maternal femininity on social media and attempt to cope with the emotional weight of precarious social media work. The article argues for using the affective practice of anxiety as a theoretical concept to explore the influencers' routinized emotional behaviour in their attempts to decrease the discrepancy between their emotions and cultural expectations. The article suggests that although anxiety can be considered a negative side effect of stressful social media work, sharing it on social media can also be understood as a tactic that plays a central role in the lifestyle influencer industry. Drawing on Vik Loveday's (2018) analysis of the "neurotic academic", the article argues that the construction of an entrepreneurial influencer self is underpinned by anxiety. This argument is formulated through the figure of the "neurotic influencer", that is the embodiment of the ambivalent nature of gendered influencer work. Article 3 was published in the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* in 2021.

The fourth and final article, which was co-authored with Susanna Paasonen, investigates the ambiguous, affective power of social media by analysing everyday encounters with parenting content among mothers. Drawing on research material composed of diaries of social media use and follow-up interviews with six women, we ask how our study participants make sense of their experiences of parenting content and the affective intensities connected to it, and how these feed into the evaluations they make concerning the value of social media and the tactics that they deploy as users. Despite the negativity involved, the study participants find themselves wanting to maintain the very connections that irritate, frustrate, and even evoke a sense of failure as these also yield instances of pleasure, joy, and recognition. We argue for the necessity of focusing on, and working through, affective ambiguity in social media in order to gain a fuller understanding of the intensities that drive their use and that impact users in different ways. This article was published in the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* in 2021.

II Theoretical Framework and Key Concepts

Ten years ago, when I first started my immersion in networked cultures of mothering, I was immediately affected by the shared atmosphere of intensity. While the social media discussions about mothers and parenting fostered connection, empowerment, and joy, there was also an onslaught of anxiety, anger, judgement, and irritation. At first my focus was on the representations of motherhood in mommy blogs, but I soon realized that simply analysing representations was not enough to understand the deeply ambiguous nature of online motherhood. Consequently, to critically examine how social media parenting culture moves its users in such deep, emotional ways, I started to look into what happens in these interactions and what lends that experience a particular tone. These questions led me to affect. Through affect inquiry, I aimed to map out the underlying tensions of the parenting discussions and investigate the emotional work that the bloggers and other content creators writing about motherhood were undertaking. Gradually I became confident that focusing on the affective power of online motherhood would speak of something broader about the contemporary social media experience.

Affect inquiry responds to the ways in which affects are mobilized by economic and cultural force. Affect, as the capacity of bodies to affect and be affected in their encounters with the world (Spinoza, 2009: 1677) has attracted growing attention in the humanities and social sciences over the past two decades. The so-called 'affective turn' in cultural theory (Blackman and Venn, 2010; Koivunen, 2010; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010) has involved a wide range of criticisms of the 'textual turn' for its preoccupation with discourses, representation, and identities and its inclination to downplay the material in accounts of society and culture (Liljeström and Paasonen, 2010: 1). The different strands of affect studies have sought to address this by focusing on sensation, intensity, and materiality (see Clough and Halley, 2007; Liljeström and Paasonen, 2010; Massumi, 2002) as well as by understanding society not only through discourses but in terms of experience and emotions (see Ahmed, 2004; Nikunen, 2019; Wetherell, 2012).

While most conceptualizations of affect highlight the essential role of intensity and the presence of quality of experience that implies a certain excess, the concept remains open to mutually incompatible definitions (Paasonen et al., 2015: 1, 6;

Seigworth and Gregg, 2010). Whereas several “main orientations” (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010) toward affect have been identified, perhaps the biggest dividing line in affect inquiry is between the new materialist conceptualization of affect as a pre-cognitive, prepersonal force and the different veins of psychological and cultural research drawing on the work of psychologist Silvan S. Tomkins, in which the distinction with emotion is more porous and where there is an interest in analysing culture and power relations (see Ahmed, 2004[2014]; Hemmings, 2005; Koivunen, 2010; Paasonen, 2017).

My research participates in feminist cultural studies inquiry that crosses multiple disciplinary borders and in which the concept of affect has been deployed in questioning the Cartesian and structuralist legacies of cultural theory and in providing alternatives to them (Paasonen, 2020a: 2; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010: 6–8). Rather than adopting any singular theoretical framework, my approach relies on recognizing and embracing the elusiveness and the flexibility of the conceptual boundaries involved (see Koivunen, 2009). In this dissertation, affect refers to bodily states and lingering intensities of feeling that are saturated by cultural norms, practices, and social structures. Relating to the work of Michel Foucault (2009), biopolitics can be understood as operating on the plane of affect (see e.g., Anderson, 2012) as these norms work specifically through bodily experience and its regulation. In other words, I ask how normative discourses of motherhood are produced and maintained via the state and its institutions, as well as through and within the embodied everyday experiences of living with social media. Such discourses are, keeping with Gregg and Seigworth (2010:7) “far more collective and ‘external’ rather than individual and interior”, even as they are acutely lived and felt.

In order to understand how affect matters in social media motherhood, I mainly think with scholars like Sara Ahmed (2004[2014]) and Margaret Wetherell (2012), who are critical of the models that rigorously divide emotion from affect (e.g. Massumi, 2002; Thrift, 2008). Combining the theories of Gilles Deleuze and Silvan Tomkins, feminist scholar Sara Ahmed studies emotions at the intersection of feminist, queer, and race studies. While her thinking has many roots, her view on emotions as “shaped by contact with objects” suggests the phenomenological notion of experience as “lived conjunction” (Ahmed, 2004: 4, 6–7; Koivunen, 2010). Ahmed (2004[2014]; 2010) sees affect and emotion interlacing and sticking together in day-to-day encounters. For her emotions include bodily processes of affecting and being affected (see Åhäll, 2018: 40), and she has used the two concepts interchangeably, with emotion as the primary term.

While Ahmed’s thinking is particularly central in the second article, her influence is significant to how this whole study is constructed and how it has evolved. The Ahmedian view of politics of emotions was my starting point and it has remained central in my understanding of affect as a cluster of negative, positive, and ambiguous feelings and bodily intensities that are both historical and cultural, and which

intensify and accumulate in social media. Ahmed (2004: 4) argues that emotionality “is clearly dependent on relations of power” and it is essential to acknowledge that affect sticks to bodies differently depending on past histories of contact (Ahmed, 2004: 92). In other words, instead of simply focusing on specific, individual emotions of mothers online, this research is interested in how affect reproduces social inequality as well as its potentially transformative effects.

Social psychologist Margaret Wetherell’s framework is based on the concept of practice that is grounded in her eclectic reading of different theorists (Bourdieu, 1990; Butler, 1990; Deleuze, 1992, 2007; Heritage, 1984; Ortner, 2006) and especially the account of emotion developed by Ian Burkitt (1997, 2002). Wetherell is also influenced by the bodies of work emerging in social psychology, psychosocial studies, and critical psychology (e.g. Brown and Stenner, 2009; Walkerdine, 2009). She (2012: 4, 20, 90) is vehement in her stipulation that human affect and emotions are embodied meaning-making largely constituted by discursive actions, reflexive representations, and verbal articulation. In my work, this is reflected through the way I approach affective structures as discursive. Namely, my focus is not only on how mothers engage with each other but also how they relate to discourses about motherhood as entities that are produced through doing and speaking. Like Ahmed, Wetherell (2012) too is interested in the circulation of affect and sees affect and emotion sliding in together and becoming embedded within social and cultural discourses. For Wetherell, the corporeality, its cultural context, and its representations combine in affective experience.

Following this line of thought, I have come to understand affect as a bodily intensity that happens in encounters with the social world, but I do not use the terms ‘affect’ and ‘emotion’ synonymously. Rather, I see affect as a vital force registered in bodies that is not reducible to personal feeling or a clearly definable emotion (Hynnä et al., 2019: 1). In other words, for me affect is an intensity that one experiences emotion with: it entails a precognitive force that affords experience with tone and quality (see Papacharissi, 2016). Emotion, conversely, refers to a more precise interpretation, naming, and classification of knowledge (Paasonen, 2017: 42). Nevertheless, Ahmed’s and Wetherell’s analyses are central to my understanding of how social media allows and confines affective connections of feeling together and to the role of routinized affective practices in everyday life. I use the term emotion when referring to their or other scholars’ works that use that notion themselves.

In turn, referring to how the participants in this research express themselves, I use the word ‘feeling’, which refers to something that is checked against previous experiences and labelled (Shouse, 2005). It is important to note, however, that the research material analysed in this dissertation is translated from Finnish to English. This is relevant because the Finnish word ‘*tunne*’ encapsulates both the affect and the more personal ‘feeling’. My participants do not use the words ‘affect’, or ‘emotion’ for that matter, in recounting and defining their experiences but speak of ‘*tunne*’,

which describes all kinds of feelings and sensations that awaken in our encounters with the world. Different cultures have different lexicons for somatic and affective experiences, and the differences among various languages suggest that there are no universal emotion concepts (Wetherell, 2012: 41). Recognizing this does not prevent understanding affect as a more general potential or force but relates to theoretical and conceptual choices (Paasonen, 2017: 42).

Importantly, the relations between affect, power, and privilege cannot be ignored (see Wetherell, 2014: 145), and affects should be interpreted as a part of a particular historical context of the world around them. As a force registered in individual bodies, affect is also something to be retrospectively named, interpreted, and articulated (Paasonen, 2021: 12). After all, theorizations of affect are just as much a form of textual and linguistic practice as any other type of scholarly investigation (Paasonen, 2014: 140; also Koivunen, 2010). For instance, when my informants' (Articles 3 and 4) experiences of social media become objects of their reflection, they foreground affect as an object of subjective narration, reflection, and contextualization so that it intermeshes with the categories of emotion.

The affective appeal and power of social media have been broadly analysed, from the formation of affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015) to the intensities involved in interacting with clusters of users and data (Sampson et al., 2018) to the diverse ways in which affect is mobilized, manipulated, and monetized within the attention economy of social media (Dean, 2010; Karppi, 2018). Scholars have also addressed the way the architecture of social media allows for affects to cluster and intensify (Dean, 2015; Paasonen, 2011, 2015a), investigated the affective features of human-machine interaction (Martins, 2019; Parikka, 2015), and discussed affective and emotional labour in social media (Duffy, 2015, 2017; Duffy and Schwartz, 2018; Jarret, 2016; Kolehmainen and Mäkinen, 2019; Terranova, 2000).

I join these conversations by exploring the role that affect plays in engaging users in social media parenting discussions through feelings of intensity. My premise is that a desire for intensity, for “some kind of affective jolt”, is what provokes the interest and curiosity of social media users by grabbing their attention and driving their movements across networks, sites, and threads (Paasonen, 2015a: 30; Dean, 2015). My analysis is also situated in a larger context of the affective politics of social media that have become an important topic of discussion in recent years. These questions are only more imperative in the context of Brexit, the 2016 US presidential election and overall, the way affect is weaponized in digital media to aggravate conflicts and incite racism, misogyny, and national populist politics (Boler and Davis, 2021). My analysis on how social media parenting discussions turn into polarized debates and ambivalence felt and managed by women in these digital spaces, offers insights into the contemporary social media experience in a wider sense than the specific focus on networked parenting culture might suggest.

The analysis involves multiple levels. It addresses the representations that are recycled in the affective discussions about motherhood, gender, and sexuality, maps out the affective practices (Wetherell, 2012) used to express and mobilize emotion, addresses the “sensations that have found a match in words” (Brennan, 2004: 19), and analyses the affective intensities that are generated by the connections and movements of human and nonhuman actors in social media. In all these instances, it is affect that makes things matter.

This research is a product of a dialogue between empirical research material and concepts and the theoretical frameworks built around them. In the rest of this chapter, I will provide a literature review of the main theoretical debates and key concepts that inform the discussions presented in this work. The study is composed of various empirical studies that help me to contextualize contemporary motherhood and social media in general in accordance with relevant fields of research. My research is an example of how studying Internet-mediated experiences can be tricky because of the quick and repeated reconfigurations of the medium (Karpf, 2019). The research articles have been published in chronological order and thereby reflect the way my approaches have evolved along with the changes in social media landscape and related scholarly debates. That is, while in the beginning my focus was strictly limited to mommy bloggers and online discussions about mothering, gradually my interests expanded to wider questions concerning affective economies as well as the dynamics of social media in a broader sense.

2.1 Tracking cultural activity

Social media texts about parenting tell of the cultural activity around motherhood at a particular moment. Normalized, vague, and unspoken ideals about mothers serve to define socially acceptable roles that become embodied in the lived experiences of women, and online spaces have become important domains through which these normative views are contested, re-evaluated, resisted, and reinforced (Green, 2012; Orton-Johnson, 2017: 2; Article 1). In seeking to map out an affective landscape of online motherhood and specifically to understand the affective power of bad mother narratives in Finnish mommy blogs (Article 1), I turn to Raymond Williams’s (1961, 1978) notion, “structures of feeling”.

Williams’s work foreshadows the contemporary interest in affect in cultural (media) studies. His view that feelings are both historically and socially rooted aligns with the scholarship about affect that I draw from in my work. Structures of feeling refers to different ways of thinking that are present at any one time in history and that are articulated through cultural texts. In *Long Revolution* (1961), the notion is described as “social experiences in solution, reflecting the culture, the mood, and the feel of a particular historical moment” and later in *Marxism and Literature* (1978) as “a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct

from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or a period” (Williams, 1978: 131).

The literary and cultural criticism of Williams addresses the industrial novel of the 1840s as an example of one structure of feeling that emerged out of the development of industrial capitalism and encapsulated middle-class consciousness (Papacharissi, 2016: 320). It is important to note that social media parenting culture functions not so much as distinct texts but in terms of networks of different thought, (dis)connections, rhythms of communication, entertainment, and information management between humans and non-humans (see Coleman, 2018: 610; Paasonen et al., 2015: 3). That said, understandings of Williams today contribute in different ways to expanding our conceptions of culture and lived experiences. By investigating what ideas in the culture the mommy blogs combine, my research widens the analytical scope from literature and historical events to the diverse realities of everyday life and to the ways in which culture is continuously reproduced and gradually developed (cf. Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015: 14, 16).

Williams’s notion is an effort to understand culture as moving, adaptable, and affective. That is, culture is felt and lived out, and always evolving. (Coleman, 2018: 609). The concept is, however, elusive and undeniably vague. It designates two opposite phenomena: ‘feeling’ as a kind of experience that defines who we are without our being able to articulate it and ‘structure’ that at the same time suggests that this level of experience has an underlying systematic pattern (Illouz, 2008: 156). Wetherell (2012: 104) critiques the chosen term structure as ‘infelicitous’ considering the “kind of open, flowing articulations he proposes”. Correspondingly, Susanna Paasonen (2021: 10) notes that although for Williams structures are dynamic relations, the very notion of a structure suggests degrees of fixity in terms of pattern and organization that are problematic in this context.

Keeping with Wetherell (2012) and Paasonen (2021: 10), I concur that the concept of affect cannot be easily conceptualized as, or be confined to, a structure as it is inherently unpredictable and ambiguous. Nevertheless, “structures of feeling” offers a useful tool to apprehend the different ways of thinking about parenting and performing motherhood that are present at a specific time in Finnish social media history and investigating the more general culturally constructed ideas about motherhood that the mommy bloggers’ narratives in this study imply. In other words, thinking through the social, contextual, and political structures of feeling in this context helps us to understand how and why certain kinds of affective figures like the bad mother are repetitively materialized in social media exchanges.

Sociologist Eva Illouz (2014: 25) notes that structures of feeling are often made visible by popular texts that encode problematic social conditions. There is something about these kinds of popular stories that resonates with the social experience of their readers, and making sense of the story is a complex process of using culture to understand one’s social experience (Illouz, 2014: 21). In order to understand the

present by locating the lived structures of feeling, it is possible to uncover adjacent (or suppressed) narratives as well. For instance, while the performances of bad motherhood by the bloggers and their readers in my research unveil many standards that mothers are judged by, they also speak of how the cultural capital of the bloggers affect the texts they write. While the ideology of intensive motherhood is primarily attainable for economically-advantaged, privileged women, who are often heterosexual, partnered, white, and middle- to upper-class (Abetz and Moore, 2018: 268), its challenger, the bad mother, is also an explicitly middle-class figure. Beverley Skeggs (1997: 1), who interviewed white working-class women in England, defines respectability as “one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of class”, which also contains judgements of race, gender, and sexuality. The ability to perform “bad motherhood” is positioned within a respectable social location.

Papacharissi (2016) contributes to the conversation about Williams by analysing the “soft structures of feeling” characteristic of social media and the role that such structures play in mobilizing the public through collective feelings of intensity, belonging, and connection. Drawing on Williams’s work, she (2016: 321) understands the impact of social media not as a function of their affordances but more as the outcome of our expectations from technology. Social media facilitate feelings of engagement (Dean, 2010; Karatzogianni and Kuntsman, 2012; Papacharissi, 2016: 301; Van Dijck, 2013), and while affective attachments to media cannot produce communities, they may produce “feelings of community” (Dean, 2010: 22). Social networking sites like Facebook may refer to themselves as “communities”, but that is rhetorical and should be viewed separately from the kind of organization that happens within these networks. While social media platforms do amplify the noise and help activate and maintain latent ties that may be imperative to the mobilization of networked publics, online activity does not necessarily equal immediate impact (Papacharissi, 2016: 310). Mommy blogs produce and circulate affect as a binding technique, but temporal, affective attachments to media like blogs are not in themselves enough to produce actual communities (see Dean, 2010: 21–22).

Social change is gradual, and as a result, cultural changes are often recognized once they are established (Papacharissi, 2016: 321; Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015: 19–20). Studying mediated everyday life then calls for shifting our attention from the stable and dominant towards the emergent (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015: 19–20; Papacharissi, 2016: 321; Williams, 1978). In other words, the analysis of social media should identify those moments when people start to think differently and new ideas and sensibilities arise (see Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015: 19). From this point of view, the diagnostic value of emergent structures of feeling is in the fact that their analysis can help pinpoint areas of conflict (Steinbock, 2019: 3): the collective interests, values, anxieties, and fantasies that are often at the level of inarticulate social experience (Illouz, 2014: 21). Structures of feeling unfold and maintain the discursive spaces where stories can be told (Papacharissi, 2016: 320).

The figure of the bad mother reflects the way social anxieties often play themselves out through more or less excessive forms (see Littler, 2013: 228; Tyler, 2008) and the way popular texts are more likely to gain popularity when they “offer (symbolic) resolutions to social contradictions” (Illouz, 2014: 25). Drawing from Williams (1961, 1975, 1978), these new, emerging cultural forms that are yet to be fully articulated are often fuelled by elements of both the dominant culture and the residual culture, the latter consisting of past cultural practices that still exert influence on the dominant and emergent culture. The mommy blog texts tell us not only about what was said and done at a particular digital space at a particular time but also about what it was like to be there (see Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015: 14). Articulating self-reflective and ambivalent confessions and ironic criticisms of normative motherhood in mommy blogs is mapping indicators of potentially emerging issues and challenges and reimagining the assumptions made about the present and the future.

2.2 Sticky intensities

Considering the ubiquity of affect, it is fair to say that the power of social media lies in their ability to create affective resonances independent of content or meaning (cf. Shouse, 2005). While the role of sociocultural context in shaping the outcome of digitally enabled expression and connection is essential (see Papacharissi, 2014: 122), social media discussions are mainly driven by affective intensities (Dean, 2015). This kind of affective attunement enables people to “feel their way” into the debates and simultaneously to affectively attune with them (Papacharissi, 2014: 4, 118). My investigation on the affective appeal of social media parenting discussions includes the analysis of how affect moves through platforms and sticks to images, texts, and bodies (Ahmed, 2004[2014]). In the context of social media, discussion about bodies extends from human ones to the nonhuman rhythms of networked media that include newsfeeds, interfaces, the parameters of engagement set by end-user licence agreements, and algorithmic predictions and decisions based on metadata (Hynnä et al., 2019: 1–2).

The second article of the dissertation is a case study of a Finnish social media debate around public breastfeeding. The study is a part of a special issue on affective body politics in *Social Media + Society*, that followed the *Affective Politics of Social Media Symposium* at the University of Turku, Finland, in 2017 (see Hynnä et al., 2019). The notion of affective body politics brings together two theoretical concepts, the concept of “body politics” and that of “affective politics”. While the former addresses the social policing and control of human bodies, the latter relates to the questions of affect in cultural theory (e.g. Clough, 2008; Koivunen, 2009; Seigworth and Gregg, 2009). Building on Foucault (1978), discussions on body politics have focused on how power works through discourses that are produced and sustained by the state and its different institutions. In turn, the emphasis of affective politics

has been on how power becomes experienced intimately in and through the body (see Abel, 2007: xi, 85). Affective body politics directs attention to the carnal ways in which bodies experience practices of governance and relate to and give shape to one another (Hynnä et al., 2019: 1).

The developments discussed in my work (Article 2) offer insight into the dynamics that shape the affective body politics of social media. In order to examine how affect becomes a binding force in social media discussions concerning different more or less marginalized bodies, I draw from Ahmed's 2004[2014] notion of sticky and circulating emotions. Ahmed is interested in the "messiness of the experiential" (2014: 210) and approaches affect as contextually bound, mediated, and deeply social (2004[2014]). In other words, her emphasis is on this sociality of emotions as they "create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place" (Ahmed, 2014: 10). Ahmed avoids making analytical divisions between bodily sensation, emotion, and thought (Åhäll, 2018: 40). Instead, she focuses on what affects do as they circulate and shape social life. As mentioned earlier, Ahmed's work challenges the distinction between affect and emotions.

Rather than asking what affects or emotions are, the emphasis lies in tracking the movement: "how emotions circulate between bodies, examining how they 'stick' as well as move" (Ahmed, 2014: 4). Ahmed (2014: 10–11) draws on Marx's theory of capital to develop the idea of an "affective economy", to argue that the objects of emotion, rather than emotions as such, circulate and thus take shape as the effect of circulation. In other words, affect (or emotion) does not inhabit the sign or commodity but is instead formed "as an effect of its circulation" (Ahmed, 2004: 45). The accumulation of affective value is a form of stickiness that depends on historical associations between bodies, objects, and signs (Ahmed, 2004: 90-92). This line of thought is carried on by Paasonen (2015a), who argues that affect draws participants into the social media discussions and that the stickiness of online platforms results in the production of affective value.

The breastfeeding debate discussed in Article 2 was both driven and animated by affect that circulates and sticks to certain comments and people (see Tyler, 2006). Ahmed (2004[2014]) contends that affects are rooted in cultural phenomena associated historically with particular bodies. This means that, for example, female bodies evoke different affective responses in a particular context than others. Gendered, raced, classed, or sexed subjects become the objects of others' affective responses, and hence, emotions are a matter of how we come into contact with others (Åhäll, 2018: 40; Ahmed, 2014: 208). This became evident as the commentators in the social media discussion board debated whether and to what extent public breastfeeding is acceptable and negotiated suitable public presentations of the female body.

Furthermore, the celebrity whose social media post about breastfeeding sparked the debate examined here was openly gay. Many comments of the online discussions

directed their outrage directly towards him, and a lot of the affective dynamics of the debate circulated and intensified around the topic of his sexuality. Emotions then do not only explain how we are affected in one way or another by something but also speak of “those judgements then hold or become agreed as shared perceptions” (Ahmed, 2014: 208). As the bodies become saturated with affect, boundaries get drawn around gender, class, and race as well as what is considered acceptable or “normal” (Article 2; also Paasonen and Pajala, 2010: 175). The bodies “take the shape of norms that are repeated over time and with force” (Ahmed, 2004: 145). Then, keeping with Ahmed (2004: 91), stickiness of a gay or a breastfeeding body is an effect that depends on the history of contact.

While analysing social media encounters, it is important to note that the dynamics of online debate tie into the particular affordances of the platforms in question (Paasonen, 2015a: 19). This means taking into account not only other people but also the nonhuman factors such as platform-specific connective techniques, including hashtags. Papacharissi’s (2014: 125) discussion of affective Twitter publics as “networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment” speaks to the significance of affect in studying social media connectivity. In my case study, Instagram’s connective practices, like hashtags, allowed the participants to mobilize motherhood as a site of political agency. At the same time, certain images grow sticky with negative and positive value leading to action. Social media practices such as ‘hashtags’, ‘liking’, ‘sharing’, and ‘up-and downvoting’ contribute to these affective dynamics.

According to (Ahmed, 2014: 6), objects are often read as the cause of emotions, and if the very contact with them engenders feeling, then emotion and sensation cannot be clearly separated. The way social media users negotiated the suitable public presentations of the (nursing) female body and how a celebrity’s gayness became an object of negative affect in a social media storm discussed in Article 2 shows that feelings like disgust, or desire for that matter, are not felt in the abstract. Affects and emotions create connections between bodies but also define who or what does not belong. That is why affect is essential also in the production of communities. At the same time, as different social media sites feed one another and different audiences are invited to join the narrative, affective responses intensify and accumulate.

2.3 Affective practice of anxiety

During the last decade, online motherhood has grown more commercialized, and for some mothers writing about their life is no longer simply a hobby. As the number of readers increases, other parents who are following are seen more as audience members, and the constant race to publish high-quality content can be strenuous. The work and working conditions of bloggers and other social media influencers have been examined widely (see e.g. Abidin, 2016; Duffy, 2017; Duffy and Hund, 2015;

Mäkinen, 2020), and affect is central to many discussions regarding lived experiences and emotional pressures of the “do what you love and love what you do” ethic (e.g. Duffy, 2016).

In the third article of this work, I argue for using the *affective practice of anxiety* as a theoretical concept in order to explore the influencer mothers’ routinized emotional behaviour in their attempts to decrease the discrepancy between their emotions and cultural expectations. The affective practice of anxiety is my elaboration of Wetherell’s (2012, 2014) concept *affective practice* that refers to one’s routinized emotional and corporeal behaviour in social situations.

Wetherell is interested in the formation of the affective functions of everyday life. For her, affects are bodily processes of meaning-making that include not only senses and somatic processes but also the routines and postures of the body (Wetherell, 2012: 28–31). Wetherell does not distinguish affective practices from narratives, meaning-making, and social relations (Wetherell, 2012: 20). Instead, she argues that it is the discursive that often makes affect powerful and radical and provides the means for it to travel (Wetherell, 2012: 19). Wetherell’s thinking travels the same paths as Clare Hemmings (2005), who has argued that if affect is understood simply as an abstract life force that is prepersonal and nonconscious, the social is ignored, and certain differences disappear from view—for instance, how “some bodies are captured and held by affect’s structured precision” (Hemmings, 2005: 562). According to Hemmings (2005: 565), “Affect might in fact be valuable precisely to the extent that it is not autonomous.”

Some of Wetherell’s views align with Ahmed as well, whose theory she (2012: 158) finds is helpful in understanding waves of public feeling. Contrary to Ahmed, however, Wetherell (2012: 159) stresses the need to locate affect in actual emoting bodies. She suggests that instead of defining affect abstractly as the movement of signs, the focus should be on affective practice that encompasses the movement of signs but also attempts to explain how affect is embodied, situated, and operates psychologically (Wetherell, 2012). That is, for Wetherell affectivity is something that is formed in relation to the individual and context and not outside it (Wetherell, 2012: 4).

Keeping with Loveday (2016: 1143), I find the notion of ‘practice’ (see also Bourdieu, 1990) useful because it acknowledges the way individuals might be constrained in their ability to act, yet it does not rule out the possibility for agency, or indeed resistance. Wetherell’s (2012) perspective is centred upon the interactivity between affectivity and discursivity. Instead of considering affect as only a feeling that is aroused at the moment that a certain encounter or experience occurs, I also examine the recollection of it as a type of affective practice (Loveday, 2016: 1145; Wetherell, 2012, 2014). Then, viewing anxiety as an affective practice allows me to explore both suppressive and productive possibilities of this highly ambivalent emotion in relation to influencer work and think how particular affective styles, routines,

and meaning-making have become so dominant in networked parenting culture (see Wetherell, 2012: 121).

Furthermore, looking at influencers' experiences through the lens of the affective practice of gendered anxiety helps in the understanding of how and why relatable femininity is work (see Kanai, 2019a: 15). It is also a matter of inclusion and exclusion. Certain affective styles are frequently linked to social class, race, and gender, and these boundaries are marked by emotions (see Ahmed, 2004[2014]; Skeggs, 2005; Wetherell, 2012: 110). The middle-class influencer mothers in my research are working within a deeply gendered context monetizing family domesticity as the maintenance of the product of relatable motherhood and family happiness rests on their shoulders.

The affective management and required sociality of social media influencers must be understood within a long history of gendered emotional and affective labour (Duffy and Hund, 2015: 10; Hochschild, 1983; Jarret, 2015). It has been argued that in its dependence upon the gendered skills of flexibility, networking, and affective labour, digital labour is increasingly feminized (Arcy, 2016; Duffy and Schwartz, 2018). Also, a lot of unpaid and unrecognized labour is involved in the field of social media, and this blurs the boundaries between consuming and producing (Duffy, 2017; Jarret, 2016; Kolehmainen and Mäkinen, 2019; Terranova, 2000).

The concepts of emotional and affective labour are often used interchangeably, but they originate from different theoretical frameworks (Mäkinen, 2020: 4). The concept of affective labour derives from post-Marxist theorizations of immaterial labour as the paradigmatic mode of labour in the current form of capitalism (Hardt, 1999; Hardt and Negri, 2000; Mäkinen, 2020: 4) and it has been the object of feminist interrogation and critique (e.g. Bolton, 2009; Federici, 2008; Fortunati, 2007; Jarrett 2016; Oksala, 2016). In turn, the notion of emotional labour, a requirement "to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" was introduced by sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983: 7). Hochschild's work has been especially important for feminist research in demonstrating the nature of the invisible and unrecognized emotional involvement of workers in the service and care sectors (Mäkinen, 2020: 4).

I examine the affective practice of anxiety specifically in relation to the feeling rules (Hochschild, 2003 [1983]); Kanai, 2019b) that regulate performances of anxiety and maternal femininity (Article 3). Feeling rules are social norms specifying what an appropriate feeling should be in a given situation (Hochschild, 2003 [1983]). The notion was developed as part of Hochschild's classic 1983 study on flight attendants' and bill collectors' conscious management of feelings—either their own or others'—to fulfil the emotional requirements of their jobs. Hochschild was particularly interested in the normative dimensions of affect and feeling rules that prescribe the expected strength and duration of an emotion. They are the cultural tools for people navigating between "what do I feel" and "what I should feel" (Hochschild,

1983: 57–58; Wetherell, 2014: 223–224). In her study, Hochschild differentiated between private-sphere “emotion work” or “emotion management” and public-waged “emotional labour”, but today the distinction between these affective economies has become blurred (Kanai, 2019b: 64). While the participants in Hochschild’s research mobilized emotion for their employers, who were in direct contact with customers, in contemporary digital life, social media influencers share their personal lives and manage their feelings for an unlimited, mostly unknown audience. In the absence of definite knowledge about who is actually following them, influencers take cues from the social media environment to imagine the audience (see boyd, 2007: 131). Sometimes, this can lead to disagreements that arise from the articulation of controversial ideas and feelings (Morrison, 2014).

Wetherell (2014: 225) is critical of Hochschild’s model for its clear-cut, neat division of affective performances. Hochschild understood the relation between actively managed affect as a battle between biology and culture that leads to the regulation of spontaneous and authentic emotional reactions (Wetherell, 2014: 222). Any experience of affect, Wetherell (2014: 225–226) argues, is likely to be heterogeneous, with a wider range of embodied practices and with a much less unambiguous divide between the public performances and those which mark “time off”. However, instead of the idea of an authentic self-being constrained by feeling rules, these so-called rules can be seen as norms that orient individuals in relation to others in social settings (Kanai, 2019a: 7). In my study, the influencer mothers use their embodied histories as a way of making sense of the prevailing dominant symbolic structures. The notion of feeling rules highlights the self-conscious experiences or general awareness of social norms about feelings they have in certain situations (see Addison, 2017: 14).

In her study on the practices and the politics of relatable femininity in intimate digital social spaces, Akane Kanai (2019a: 31) describes how feeling rules shape the way young blogger women articulate their experiences in order to be relatable. In the same analytical framework of self-presentation, the *affective practice of anxiety* is how the influencers perform feelings to their followers by following, challenging, or capitalizing on the feeling rules. The concept of affective practice is especially useful when contemplating what affects do (Loveday, 2016: 1148; Ahmed, 2004: 4). My interest lies in management and prevention but also in the possible utilization of the potential anxieties by the influencers in a situation where emotional investment in one’s work encompasses all areas of life (Dobson et al., 2018). The notion of the affective practice of anxiety is a sense-making lens through which it is possible to conceptualize the ambivalent and gendered connections of the influencer industry and to analyse both performative anxiety and the vulnerability that visibility can bring.

2.4 Ambiguity of affect

Ambiguity is prevalent in social media exchanges of all kinds, and the questions concerning the complexity and multiplicity of affective intensities are at the heart of this dissertation. The mommy bloggers' affective confessions, defiant criticisms, and anxious yet tactical negotiations of lifestyle influencers are rife with ambiguity. Also, while the online debate around public breastfeeding rallied for nursing mothers' rights, driven by affect, it also diverged into darker paths where many things happened at the same time. Finally, the analysis of everyday encounters with parenting content among women in different stages of motherhood demonstrates how users can enjoy social media content or intensely engage in discussions with that which they dislike or even despise (Article 4). In other words, while the affective ambiguity of social media is specifically targeted in the final article (4) in the context of mothers' everyday encounters with networked parenting content, affect as a force that is both compelling and highly ambivalent appears throughout this work.

Paasonen (2021: 5, 9) argues that to understand the subject of its research in all its diversity, a critical cultural inquiry has to be both contextual and attuned to ambiguity. The move away from binary divisions calls for foregrounding ambiguity and movement (Paasonen, 2021: 2, 4). Ambiguity, understood as involving the fundamental non-fixity of meaning (Beauvoir, 1976), is an inescapable part of how we make sense of the world (see also Sundén and Paasonen, 2021). It is important to stress, however, that instead of a general relativist stance acknowledging that the meaning of things is always both contextual and subjective, ambiguity discussed here is an issue of qualitative methodological granularity that is one of the founding methodological choices of my work (see Chapter 3).

To begin with, using qualitative methods inevitably involves uncertainty and ambiguity. Ethnographic inquiry in particular calls for cultivating interpretive flexibility in the production of knowledge (Deener, 2017). This is not "because the qualitative methods are imprecise or weak, but because such ambiguity is an accurate characterization of lived cultural experience" (Lareau, 2000; also Van Maanen, 1988: 127). Focusing on ambiguity means abandoning the quest of totalizing outcomes of strong theories (see Paasonen, 2021; Sedgwick, 2003: 134–135) and embracing the muddled and elusive experiences, practices, and affective intensities of contemporary datafied culture. This means holding on to tensions and frictions without trying to resolve them but instead grasping how things appearing contradictory may in fact be co-dependent, or give rise to one another (Bem, 2019: 3, 22; Paasonen, 2021: 5). In Article 4, ambiguity leads to key methodological questions regarding complexity and simultaneity in how affect is registered and retrospectively described and to the forms of analysis that are able to hold onto the messiness that this entails: the ways in which networked parenting exchanges foster connection, empowerment, and confidentiality inasmuch as anxiety, shame, and judgement make evident the complexity

and ambiguity of experiences of mothering in social media (see Abetz and Moore, 2018: 266; Article 4).

The idea that the good and the bad can be distinctly told apart has persisted in affect inquiry ever since Baruch Spinoza's seventeenth-century consideration of affectations as either increasing or diminishing the body's power to exist and to act (Spinoza, 1992). At the same time, ambiguity has remained an integral part of theorizations of affect, from the work of Spinoza as "the one and the same thing can be at the same time good and bad, and also indifferent" (Spinoza, 1992: 153) to that of Silvan S. Tomkins, Gilles Deleuze and the wide array of current inquiry (see Article 4; also Paasonen, 2021). As Tomkins (2008: 620) articulates, without affect, "nothing else matters—and with its amplification, anything else can matter". Affect brings together "urgency and generality" and "lends power to memory, to perception, to thought, and to action" (Tomkins, 2008). Excitement, in particular, is that which provides things with a sense of magic, but at the same time it remains unpredictable as it increases, fades, and weakens in the course of repetition and familiarity (Paasonen, 2021: 13; Tomkins, 2008: 191, 193). An affective intensity that adds to one's excitement can intermesh with or even fuel anger, anxiety, and shame, just as a sensation can be simultaneously frustrating and startling, sad and gratifying, dreary and engaging (Coleman, 2016). Affects move us and connect us to things, but they can also overwhelm us (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010). Affective intensities that are stimulating come in all kinds of tones, and this ambiguity and complexity may be "where much of their appeal lies" (Paasonen, 2016).

To consider affective ambiguity in social media is also to address mixed feelings felt towards both human and nonhuman actors. The ambivalences in human-machine relations are concretized in the reaction buttons and emoticons that are rife with the kind of ambiguity that has haunted the use of smileys in online exchanges since the 1970s (Highfield, 2018; Matamoros-Fernández, 2018; Paasonen, 2015b). Facebook's additional reaction options ('love', 'haha', 'wow', 'sad', 'angry'), introduced in 2016, and the seventh reaction button 'care' added during the COVID-19 pandemic, are divided into superficially clear-cut registers of affect. This aims to qualify the affective dynamics of online exchanges and to condense them into analysable data. Harnessing these affective qualities for value production aims at helping commercial parties to tweak their advertising and PR campaigns and to adjust users' news feeds to prioritize content that they are likely to find positively sticky. However, affective complexity—irony or sarcasm for instance—are not easily contained in the expressive range of these functions, and as the mothers' interviews in this study (Article 4) demonstrate, the actual use and interpretation of both reaction buttons and emoticons is a much more complex and culturally diverse practice (Paasonen, 2021: 86). This reflects how, when the structural level of data capitalism is highlighted at the expense of the micro, "contextual nuances, contradictions, and ambiguities(...) fade from view" (Paasonen, 2021: 6).

The ways users think and feel about the online spaces they move through and engage with are steeped in affective complexity and ambiguity. Ambiguity runs rife in social media exchanges of all kinds, from participatory reluctance (Cassidy, 2018) to the cultivation of digital resignation (Draper and Turow, 2019), sensations of creepiness connected to the leakage of personal data (Shklovski et al., 2014) and the simultaneously boring and engrossing appeal of apps and sites (Hand, 2017; Petit, 2015). The messy nature of feelings and their lack of attention to senses of cognitive order make them difficult to identify in relation to the traditional sense of 'meaning' and 'interpretation' on which media studies have often relied (Skeggs and Wood, 2012: 144). Ambiguous affective states, felt as having both positive and negative aspects, are an essential part of the social media experience. Working through affective ambiguity is crucial to tackling this affective complexity and gaining a fuller understanding of the growing appeal of these platforms and exchanges.

III Methodological Considerations

For several years I have strived to create meaning through immersion in a specific context (Tracy, 2013: 3). I have read mommy blogs, looked at Instagram profiles, followed hashtags, and read discussion boards. I have interviewed social media influencers and mothers from different backgrounds and followed commentary on mothers' social media use in the news. This meaning-making process has led to an ethnographically-informed perspective that aims to gain a wide view of a specific cultural and social phenomenon. My multimethod study offers an examination of online motherhood through four different case studies. The studies appear here as published articles, which all have diverse research materials (also outlined in Figure 2).

The methodological body of the research is developed around an analytically selective approach that I call 'reparative flow'. This flow-oriented reparative reading is carried out by combining two methodological principles, namely a concept of *flow* as a way of moving through and understanding the entangled networks of the digital era (Markham and Gammelby, 2018: 454) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003) *reparative reading* that opens up a space for surprises and positive affect. In this chapter I first discuss this perspective in more detail. I then move on to reflect on the methodological choices of each article: what kind of research material was collected and how it was analysed. (In addition, a detailed description of each method can also be found in the four research articles, at the end of the thesis.) Finally, I consider the ethical decisions made during the research process.

Article no.	Name	Research Question	Conceptual Framework	Method and Material
1	Bad is the new good: Negotiating bad motherhood in Finnish mommy blogs	How do mommy blogs mobilize their readers affectively?	structures of feeling, intensive motherhood	A thematic analysis and close reading of two mommy blogs and their comment sections
2	Bare flesh and sticky milk: An affective conflict over public breastfeeding	How are affective body politics articulated and felt in social media?	affect, intensity, stickiness	Content analysis of Instagram posts and thematic analysis and close reading of online comments
3	Ambivalent influencers: Feeling rules and the affective practice of anxiety in social media influencer work	How do influencer mothers negotiate the feeling rules that govern maternal femininity and attempt to cope with the emotional weight of social media work?	affective practice, feeling rules	In-depth interviews with Finnish influencer mothers and online observation of their social media accounts, thematic analysis and close reading
4	"I feel the irritation and frustration all over the body": Affective ambiguities in networked parenting culture	How do mothers make sense of their experiences of parenting content and the affective intensities connected to it?	affective ambiguity	Observation diaries of mothers' social media use, follow-up interviews, thematic analysis

Figure 2. Summary of the peer-reviewed research articles with their respective research datasets, methods and research questions.

3.1 Going with the flow

In my other profession as a photographer, I choose different lenses that shape the way I see the world through the viewfinder of my camera. I move around the subject and look at it from different angles. As I frame my picture, I exclude many things, but even so, my subject appears slightly different with every click of the shutter. In a much similar manner, this research of social media experience has required making use of multiple lenses and different points of view. The extensive project has allowed me time and leeway to make sense of the phenomenon I am interested in. While the immersion in my research environment has led to moments of clarity, there has been plenty of uncertainty and numerous failed attempts to read materials that felt both intriguing and hard to grasp. This ambivalence is at the heart of the methodological perspective that I describe as *'reparative flow'*.

In my work, reparative flow refers to an approach that brings together two methodological principles in order to explore the visceral and the affective in digital motherhood and work through complexity and ambiguity in social media. Flow is a multidisciplinary tool developed for qualitative digital research by Annette N. Markham and Ane Kathrine Gammelby. It requires immersing oneself in the research environment over a longer period of time and embracing the complexity of that situation (Markham and Gammelby, 2018: 460). Markham and Gammelby (2018: 454) conceptualize flow as "what we study (product) and how we engage with it (process)".

First of all, as most social situations are now seamless hybrids of online and offline, flow aims to study the whole lived experience of digitally-saturated existence.

This includes the digital traces we leave but also the affective responses that are not conveyed in the single comment, reaction button or emoji. Secondly, within the thick entanglements of digitally-saturated cultural experiences, a key characteristic of flow as a process is that it becomes contextually situated and analytically selective. This position aligns with a long lineage of feminist and interpretive scholarship that stresses the importance of both identifying and taking an active, situated stance toward the research context (Markham and Gammelby, 2018: 452–454; Haraway, 1988).

Donna Haraway (1988), among others, has criticized traditional knowledge production for creating the illusion of a blind objectivity. Feminist scholarship informed by Haraway's concept of 'situated knowledges' involves a self-reflexive stance towards one's own biases, power, and identity positions in research practices (Haraway, 1998; also Luka and Millette, 2018: 5). In flow, researcher's choices are seen as a natural part of moving through the process, and moving with and through situations to attend to the flows of meanings within material and digital culture is considered crucial (Markham and Gammelby, 2018: 455; Pink, 2007). Markham and Gammelby (2018: 462) summarize flow as a "creative remix of long-standing principles of constructivist grounded theory, symbolic interaction, and postmodern ethnography, with a strong foundation of feminist epistemologies".

In social media, the amount of potential research material can feel overpowering, and grasping affective intensities and lived experiences requires an innovative approach. My adaptation of flow draws inspiration from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of 'reparative reading', which to her is the opposite of the so-called 'paranoid reading' that has been somewhat dominant in contemporary cultural theory, disregarding other interpretative practices, ways of knowing, and making sense of the world (Sedgwick, 2003: 126; see also Paasonen, 2011, 2014). For Sedgwick, paranoid inquiry implies an aggravated suspicion and compulsive will to uncover and reveal the underlying power structures as "there must be no bad surprises [...] paranoia requires that bad news be always already known" (2003: 130). It produces and requires definite results that are firm in their premises, aim to weaken the operations of power, and are potentially totalizing in their conclusions (Paasonen, 2014: 137). Circular reasoning where the result is the same as the premise is common in cultural research motivated by political ends (Paasonen, 2014: 137).

For example, we already know that disturbing forces are at work within the social media industry and that society imposes gendered roles on mothers. Recounting this can be important, but is it enough? Suspicion works well with methodologies seeking to be critical of cultural norms and structures, but it is less useful in understanding the ambivalence of social media experience, which I am most concerned with. This does not mean abandoning a critical attitude. I do not suggest that social inequalities and stereotypes do not matter or deny the considerable value of work that reminds us of the hegemonic forces that structure our experience of the world (Crozier, 2008: 53; Paasonen, 2014; Wiegman, 2014: 12). Rather, keeping with Sedgwick (2003: 126),

I insist that paranoid inquiry should be viewed “as one kind of cognitive/affective theoretical practice among other, alternative kinds”.

In turn, reparative theory, inspired by the work of Melanie Klein and Silvan Tomkins, lacks in unequivocal outcomes and is open to moments of not knowing (Paasonen, 2014: 137; Sedgwick, 2003: 145–146). This implies the possibility of any number of readings—some of them predictable, others surprising. Following Ellis Hanson (2012: 547), reparative reading is acknowledgement of our world as “damaged and dangerous”, but instead of retelling the bad news, it seeks to “build or rebuild some more sustaining relation to the objects in our world” (also Wiegman, 2014). It is “affectively driven, motivated by pleasure and curiosity” (Cvetkovich, 2007: 462). Drawing from Klein, Sedgwick finds it crucial to recognize the paranoid and reparative as flexible positions, not fixed structures or personalities. She makes clear that they represent impulses not just towards the research material but toward the kind of authority that critic seeks to employ (Sedgwick, 1997: 8; Wiegman, 2014: 10). Hence, the paranoid and the reparative must co-exist, interlace, and reinforce one another.

In my work, reparative approach connects to an interest in what affect does socially and politically. Reparative reading inquires after the possibilities of knowledge production, asking how “is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects?” (Sedgwick 2003: 124). As mentioned earlier, public discussions on parenting are particularly problem-oriented, just as established critiques of networked communication rarely do justice to the everyday uses of social media. I find it important to consider how and what positive curiosity and open-ended analyses of affective social media experiences can contribute to societal debate. Moreover, working with Sedgwick involves the effort to reflexively deal with my “cultural baggage” (see Åhäll 2018) in terms of motherhood. That is to say, the *reparative* flow of my research has particularly to do with personal struggles in remaining open to positive affect in the face of my research material. These struggles trace back to my early days as a new mother with postpartum depression and to my later experiences in neurodivergent parenting. While no two paths to parenthood ever look the same, these experiences have left me feeling different so that I tend to identify as an outsider in many mainstream parenting conversations. Following Ahmed (2010: 36), my interpretations depend on my “affective situation”, so that efforts to read reparatively open up spaces for positive affect, and for knowing differently.

This dissertation has been most of all a process. Then reparative flow is not an exact research method but an experimental methodological principle at the heart of my thinking that entails different methods. Like any contemporary digitally-saturated culture, social media motherhood generates an enormous amount of digital traces. The availability of social media data facilitates a distanced approach to cultural research: “it can dull the researcher’s sensibility that anything we label ‘object’ or ‘culture’ or ‘data’ exists only as a momentary capture of a continual flow of time/space” (Markham and Gammelby, 2018: 452–453). Reparative reading works as a

resistance towards strong theories that support large narratives and definite generalizations (Sedgwick, 2003: 133).

Reparative flow also maps on to the value of the mundane and the micro as one of the founding methodological choices of this work. Working with small, rich research materials allows me to understand complex, messy, and elusive experiences, practices, and affective intensities of living with social media (cf. Luka and Millette, 2018: 1–2; Wang, 2016). The depth, granularity, and density of the research materials offer vignettes into both the ambiguous, affective power of social media and the ways in which contemporary norms of motherhood are felt in the engagements with social media. The appreciation of the reparative potential of my approach has made it possible to remain open to surprises that emerge from the research material, accept the inevitable incompleteness of my analysis, and embrace the affective complexity of the social media landscape of motherhood.

The overall function of the reparative flow in this project has been to remain open to the ambiguity of the material studied (Paasonen, 2011: 136), identify meaning in movement, and transform it into something more tangible so that it can be analysed (Markham and Gammelby, 2018: 454). Four individual case studies function as specific lenses I have chosen to comprehend how contemporary motherhood is felt through technically-mediated connections in contemporary Finland. The research materials of each article are examined from a certain theoretical point of view, and the methodological potential of specific concepts is used to facilitate the practice of thematic analysis, content analysis, and close reading of the material. In the first two articles of the dissertation, the focus is on different kinds of online content, namely blogs, discussion forum comments, and Instagram posts. The final two articles move the focus to the level of experience, specifically interviews of social media influencers, diaries of social media use, and follow-up interviews of mothers.

3.2 Affective texts

The first article is based on my original idea to analyse discussions around the figure of a “bad mother” that were circulating in mommy blogs especially during the first half of the 2010s. I have familiarized myself with the cultural environment of the Finnish “mamasphere” (see Friedman, 2013) by observing a wide range of Finnish family blogs for several years, and I originally contacted four bloggers and secured consent from three of them. By the time I was able to start my research, one of them had given up blogging, so I chose to address the issue specifically in two popular blogs, *Project Mama* and *Lähiömutsi (Suburban Mom)*.

The chosen blogs can be considered as Finnish mommy blogger pioneers, and they have had an important role in the rise of the family influencer phenomenon and the way mothers negotiate their identities and perform their lifestyles in social media. While *Project Mama* is specifically known for disrupting dominant motherhood

narratives with her ironic approach, *Lähiömutsi* posts about family life, travelling, and sustainable consumer choices and also regularly reflects on the practice of blogging as a profession. Especially in their earlier years, both blogs contributed considerably to the discussions about good and bad motherhood. The content, social conventions, practices, and norms of the two blogs, in general, are also representative of the Finnish mommy blog genre at the time (cf. Jäntti et al., 2018).

For Article 1, I first read through the entire blogs and then extracted posts that addressed the norms of contemporary motherhood. I then continued by establishing the central themes emerging from the chosen blog posts and their comment sections. The initial process here, as well as with each textual dataset of this dissertation, started with reading through the materials several times and making notes while reading. After the initial coding, I continued into purposive sampling to select a smaller subset of posts. I combed through the research material line-by-line, set excerpts of text into categories, and moved them around in order to be able to detect consistent themes. This method is best described as a thematic analysis, which is noted for its flexibility (King, 2004). First, it is not closely tied to specific theories (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). Second, it is not a singular approach but rather a cluster of sometimes conflicting approaches that share an interest in capturing, identifying, and analysing patterns in research material (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2020: 6).

Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2020: 3, 6) stress the importance of the researcher's subjectivity as an analytical resource. The themes lead me into purposive sampling to select a smaller subset of posts to focus on in-depth detailed analysis and close reading. Cultural theorist Mieke Bal (2002: 8) argues for a conceptual rather than a theoretical perspective on cultural research. In this approach, concepts become meaningful for cultural analysis when they help to understand the object better. This requires a constant exchange between the theoretical and the empirical, a simultaneous commitment to both theories and concepts and to the material under study (Bal, 2002: 44–46; see also Saaremaa, 2010: 34–36).

In Article 1, I use two main theoretical concepts to understand the affective power of a bad mother figure: intensive parenting (Hays, 1996) and structures of feeling (Williams, 1975). These concepts serve as tools to structure my thinking and interpret the research material. However, while certain concepts guide the choice of the subject and materials of the study, theory becomes relevant only in interaction with the object of research (Bal, 2002). The secondary concepts, irony and confession, were formed after reading the research material to explain how popular blogs mobilize their readers through self-reflective yet ambivalent confessions and ironic criticisms of normative motherhood.

When the object changes, the relevant concepts change (Bal, 2002). While forming the argument of the first case study, I was forced, for the most part, to abandon the analysis of the mommy blogs' discussion culture. As a result, I wanted to build the next case study around the themes and affective dynamics of online parenting

discussions. With Article 2, I focus on what may be gained from accounting for affect in studies of passionate and often indignant online discussions surrounding breastfeeding. The heated online breastfeeding disputes are familiar to anyone who has engaged with motherhood-related social media, and the chosen case serves as a good example of these debates as well as of the affective dynamics of social media discussions at a more general level.

Article 2 was born from a presentation held in Tartu, Estonia in 2017 where I participated in the conference organized by the Association of Internet Researchers. It investigates the affective body politics of a social media debate that was sparked to life when a Finnish celebrity gay stylist, Teri Niitti, published a picture on Instagram of an unknown woman nursing her baby on a plane. The case study addresses the various layers of meaning-making, affect, and cultural discourses on Instagram and in a popular Finnish discussion forum, *Vauva.fi* (English: *baby.fi*).

My strategy in analysing how affect moves through and across social media platforms (Ahmed, 2004[2014]; Paasonen, 2015a) can be described as a cross-platform approach, in which each platform is treated with sensitivity for their affordances, qualities, and user cultures (see Rogers, 2017, 99). On Instagram, I focused on the breastfeeding photographs and their captions, organized around hashtag #*teriniitti*, in order to analyse the power of hashtags and images when motherhood is mobilized as a site of political agency. I utilized content analysis to categorize images according to specific aspects of their content and looked for differences and similarities (see Faulkner et al., 2017: 161). The pictures were posted largely by mothers and breastfeeding activists as a form of protest, but as it happened, due to the lack of more substantial topics, newspapers picked up on the conversation, and the discussion began to amplify across a larger audience. This generated another type of content, including memes, screenshots, and pictures of Teri Niitti himself along with various jokes mocking or laughing at him or making fun of the incident in general.

On *Vauva.fi*, I chose the longest conversation thread covering the incident, which went through several rounds of thematic analysis. These comments were anonymous. With this coding, I settled upon different themes, which were organized into two categories: the (in)appropriate public presentation of the female body and Teri Niitti's sexuality as an object of negative affect. To map out the affective dynamics of online parenting discussions, I also paid special attention to how Instagram's hashtags and emoticons and the discussion forum's platform's upvoting and downvoting features were used to mediate affect.

3.3 Ambivalent experiences

The first two articles focus on online content: different texts, images, and bodies that are saturated with affect. In order to further tackle the affective appeal they engender, I move to explore these tensions on the level of experience. Article 3 turns the

lens towards social media influencers who utilize motherhood to create social media content professionally. The article draws on four in-depth interviews with Finnish mothers who have large social media followings.

The four influencers are relatively well known in Finland. They are not mommy bloggers or parenting influencers, but they all share a lot of parenting-related content and monetize their following by integrating commercial content into social media posts. The sample of participants is reflective of the desire to explore meanings influencer mothers give to their life and work. I have been observing Finnish lifestyle blogs for more than 10 years, and through my work as a photographer in the fields of journalism and lifestyle, I also have contacts inside the Finnish social media influencer industry. As part of snowball sampling, these connections proved to be much more valuable in finding participants for my research than simply sending out official invitation emails. For example, one of the participants told me she agreed to be interviewed mainly because a certain influencer that she considered “cool” and “trustworthy” had also agreed.

I initially contacted eight influencers and secured consent from four of them. From the time each informant agreed to be interviewed, I started to conduct daily observations of their online profiles in order to form an understanding of their communicative practices and self-branding strategies (see Abidin, 2017: 3). This is important because although research questions provide guidelines for observation, actual observations and the research materials tend to provoke new questions (boyd, 2008: 30). All four semi-structured in-depth interviews took place in person. The discussions were recorded with participants’ consent and transcribed by me.

At the most basic level, interviews are conversations (Kvale, 1996). Building rapport is important for qualitative interviewing, and exchanging affective information between participant and interviewer is key to developing understanding and connection. This is important in interviews because it fosters increased disclosure as the interviewer’s self-disclosure encourages participants’ disclosure (Kazmer and Xie, 2008; Moon, 2000). Feminist scholars discussing interviewing as a research method (e.g. DeVault and Gross, 2012; Ribbens, 1989) also emphasize that interviews are socially constructed, eventually rather hierarchical situations in which the researcher will inevitably have greater power over the process. It is imperative to take responsibility for this power, pay extra attention to listening, and respect the participant’s right to tell their story.

During the interview process, it became clear that there was space for improvement in the way I conducted the dialogue. Listening is not as easy as it may seem, and failures to listen are common in our interactions with others (DeVault and Gross, 2012: 216). While transcribing the influencer interviews, I learned that I tend to start talking myself when the interviewee says something interesting. In turn, there was one time that I failed to ask a crucial follow-up question and noticed this only after

listening to the recording. I did contact the participant afterward, but these experiences forced me to rethink and consciously develop my interview style.

Next, the interviews underwent several rounds of thematic analysis. I was interested in how the influencers negotiated intimacy in the “attention economy” (e.g. Senft, 2013) and discussed the stressful nature of their work. Consequently, I started by highlighting all the interview sections related to this. After the first round of coding, I began a thorough examination of the nature of the discussions. The interviews afforded rich and nuanced data. The themes that stood out in all the discussions were the negotiations regarding cultural and social norms of motherhood and the circle of self-evaluation of the influencers struggling to meet their followers’ expectations.

In qualitative research, the process of data collection, analysis, and writing are often interrelated and occur simultaneously throughout the research process (Creswell, 2007). My analysis became more theoretically informed when I immersed myself in Vik Loveday’s work around the concept of the ‘neurotic academic’ and utilized Margaret Wetherell’s notion of ‘affective practice.’ These concepts enabled me to carry out a more detailed close reading that led into the figure of a ‘neurotic influencer’ and the ‘affective practice of anxiety’ acting as the main interpretive devices for my inquiry and interpretation. This echoes the flexibility of thematic analysis as a method as it can be used with quite different guiding theories, orientations to the research material, coding practices, and theme development (Braun and Clarke, 2020, 4).

In the fourth and final article, co-written with Susanna Paasonen, we argue for working through affective ambiguity in the uses of social media. The final article originates from the place of *having been there*, namely my own experiences with digital parenting culture after becoming a mother, that in many ways led to this thesis coming in to being. My original plan was to interview new mothers about their social media use and reflect on my own experiences. However, with time, the embodied experiences of those early days began to fade, and my scholarly interests started to shift. I became interested in exploring the ways in which mothers’ engagements with online parenting culture manifests not just maternal experiences but the complexity of lived experiences of bodies in social media generally.

The fourth article expands the methodological scope of this work still further. The research material consists of diaries of social media use and follow-up interviews with six participants between 32 and 45 years old in different stages of motherhood. This is a small, mostly heterosexual, highly educated sample of Finnish women in different stages of motherhood, and hence both limited and very specific. The participants were recruited via my personal networks and the snowball method. The diaries of social media use track participants’ reflections of and reactions to parenting-related content over a period of five days. The participants were given a few open-ended questions and instructed to particularly reflect on their feelings and experiences

related to social media mothering content. By outlining an interpretative structure on otherwise unstructured research material, we were able to trace “reflexive practice of a particular, rather than completely general, nature” (Bell, 1998; Markham and Couldry, 2007: 680). In our study, the diaries enabled participants to express their experiences and feelings without the presence of the researcher, and the affective aspects of the moments described in the diaries perhaps came out differently than they would have if the text had been produced via an interview. This facilitated the sharing of “emotional data” (Spowart and Nairn, 2014: 328, 337).

I conducted the follow-up interviews in the spring of 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. I was working from home and talking to the participants over Zoom, a cloud-based videoconferencing service. It was often convenient, particularly in terms of time effectiveness and access to participants living in other cities (cf. Archibald et al., 2019). However, there were also issues; for example, taking turns at appropriate times was hard as lagging connections would create delays and stall the conversation flow. Also, silence in real-life conversation creates a natural rhythm, but in Zoom, even short silences made me anxious about the technology, and paying attention to these factors consumed a lot of energy.

The interviews were structured around the previously predetermined yet open-ended questions and follow-up questions concerning the ideas and affective intensities arising from the diaries. In other words, participants’ notes on their experiences of social media became objects of reflection. The questions were combined with the method of scroll-back (Robards and Lincoln, 2017). The ‘scroll-back’, as developed by Brady Robards and Sian Lincoln, is a qualitative research method applied in an interview context where the study participants browse their social media history together with the researcher(s). The method was designed to study transformations in people’s social media use over time and to explore and reflect on the longitudinal nature of digital traces. As expected, the scroll back method aroused the longest conversations with the participants with older children. With them, we would travel back in time through their lives and encounter mundane everyday events and meaningful memories arousing a wide array of feelings. These digital traces are records of people’s lives, but they are also carefully curated, and disclosures made through social media are largely dependent on context and insider knowledge (Marwick and boyd, 2014; Robards and Lincoln, 2017: 721). Having participants to provide context gives deeper meaning to the seemingly ordinary content (Robards and Lincoln, 2017: 721).

Finally, the diaries and interview transcripts were analysed bottom-up by coding them for the affective intensities addressed, the specific moments and contexts these connected to, and how the study participants described these as feeding or supporting evaluations made concerning the value and worth of social media and their own approaches to its uses. Our analysis examines affective ambiguity in social media as an issue of *experience, evaluation, and tactics*.

3.4 Ethical reflexivity

Throughout this work, I have aspired to make my thought process visible in describing both my methodological decisions and the analysis. I also want to be reflexive about my biases and limitations (see boyd, 2008). As I have discussed above, the demand for accountability for one's process of analysis and the acknowledgement of culturally as well as subjectively located viewpoints trace back to feminist standpoint epistemology (see Grosz, 1993; Haraway, 1991: 183–201; Harding, 1993; Kyrölä, 2010: 21; Skeggs, 1995). This kind of reflexivity can be defined as the process of analysing how the researcher's social and cultural background constructs their beliefs, how these beliefs influence their perceptions, and how they interpret and give meaning to the activity (Myerhoff and Ruby, 1982: 1–7; Ojanen, 2008: 3; Wasserfall, 1997: 152). Being reflexive about one's position and choices during the research process is crucial for “finding practical and defensible balancing points between opposing tensions” (Baym, 2009: 173) and “stabilizing a research project through self-disclosure and transparency” (Abidin and Seta, 2020: 10).

I embody what it is like to be a mother managing ambivalence in digital spaces and a researcher invested in understanding everyday practices of living with and in social media (cf. Abidin, 2020). I have experienced postpartum depression and struggled with anxiety and insomnia. I am also a university educated, white cisgender woman sharing the parenting responsibility with my partner. I benefit from the privilege of my identities and have a personal investment in seeing and interpreting the research material in a particular way. During the design and practice of this research, I have been forced to reflect on how my own experiences as a mother and my ambivalent, sometimes highly affective engagements with parenting-related social media sites affect my perceptions and interpretations. In feminist-situated epistemologies, this is seen as an inevitability that can be fruitfully employed in research (see Kyrölä, 2010: 24). The knowing self is multidimensional, partial in all its identities, and these simultaneous contradictions make it possible to “see together” with the research participants (Haraway, 1988: 586).

My position as a mother has also given me access to stories that might not have been shared to this extent with a researcher who had not shared the same experiences. Correspondingly, my other profession as a photographer connects me to communities through which my research calls have been circulated. Yet, it is important to remember that lived experiences of being a mother are diverse. They are linked to race, social class, age, and sociocultural location (e.g. Miller, 2005). For instance, the ideology of intensive parenting is primarily only attainable for economically-advantaged, privileged women, who are often heterosexual, partnered, white, and middle- to upper-class (Abetz and Moore, 2018: 268). As discussed in Chapter 1, the recruitment of participants through my personal and professional networks and the use of the snowball method have no doubt produced similarity. For example, all the

participants are educated, and they can be characterized as middle-class. Both the interviewing and the observation diaries rely on self-reflexivity, and reflexive telling is a form of cultural capital. Self-reflexivity depends upon access to resources and parallel forms of capital that are classed, raced, and gendered (Skeggs, 2002; Skeggs et al., 2008). In other words, understanding who the participants are as well as what kind of research material certain methods produce is a crucial part of framing the analysis.

Although the empirical materials used in this study are varied, the research is strongly focused on human experience, and regarding the ethics of the study, the main objective has been to form a confidential relationship with the research subjects. The deeper into the individual's personal life the research delves, the more important it is to take into account the subject's autonomy. How does a person feel about their relationship to their information? What ethical expectations do users have for the social media site on which they are interacting? (Markham, 2012, 2018: 5). These questions are crucial because individual and cultural definitions and expectations of privacy are contextual, relational, and changing (see boyd, 2014; Markham, 2018). People operating in public online spaces can maintain strong expectations of privacy (Markham and Buchanan, 2012: 8). For example, social media influencers' relationships to publicity are often rather ambivalent. Despite the tens of thousands of readers and followers, a blog or an Instagram account may still be experienced as a private space by its host (cf. Markham, 2018; Markham and Buchanan, 2012: 6–7).

Understanding the perspective of research participants is crucial to obtaining truly informed consent. In the contact letters to the participants and further discussions with them (Articles 1, 3, and 4), I did my best to ensure that the participants understood the nature of the study and their role in it. In the article on mommy blogs (Article 1), I acquired research permission to use the blogs as research material. In the study that investigates the intimate cultures of Finnish influencer mothers (Article 3), I asked for their permission to observe their social media accounts for research purposes before the interviews. This choice was made considering the subjects' right to know they are being researched and the fact that influencers often open up about issues that concern their private life.

The article on mommy blogs (Article 1) also analyses discussions in the blogs' comments sections, where people are either anonymous or use more or less recognizable screen names. As it would have been impossible for me to ask for a research permit from each commentator, I chose to treat the blogs as spaces controlled by their writers, and from this perspective, asking the bloggers' permission was enough. Some of the blogs' commentators use their real names, others use easily recognizable pseudonyms, and a few write anonymously. Some scholars (e.g. Turtiainen and Östman, 2013) advise not to reveal the commentators' real screen names and leave out other possible details that would expose their real identities. Others (e.g. Markham and Buchanan, 2012) point out the possibility of some individuals objecting to having

their writing anonymized in any published results. I chose to withhold the screen names and to only use direct quotes that were a few words long. Furthermore, all quotes have been translated from Finnish to English and have therefore been further anonymized.

Similarly, in the article on the social media debate on breastfeeding (Article 2), in which I analyse both Instagram posts and anonymous posts on a discussion forum, I did not require research permits. The Instagram posts in question are under a hashtag that was used to reach a broad public and to stir up the conversation around public breastfeeding. It can be assumed that the authors expect to be observed by strangers when participating in a public debate (see Townsend and Wallace, 2016). That does not mean that they would necessarily agree to be researched, but then again research here is not about the people but about the dynamics of an online discussion. I chose to describe the posts without identifying the user IDs of everyday Instagram users and did not include photographs in the article. The texts on Instagram were chosen to represent typical messages shared during the hashtag campaign. I have directly quoted some Instagram photo captions as well as anonymous discussion forum posts and translated them from Finnish to English, making it difficult to connect them to original posts.

In Articles 3 and 4, the primary research material is in-depth interviews. I asked for permission to record the discussions and explained that the possible quotes would be translated into English and that the recordings would be destroyed after the transcription. The main themes and procedures for interviews were laid out in writing and explained to the interviewees. In these processes, confidentiality was an important concern. All the interview participants were invited to choose pseudonyms and given a chance to comment on the parts of the manuscript concerning them. In the case of the influencers, I omitted details that could make their identities recognizable to some Finnish readers. Similarly, in the study on mothers' social media use, I edited the transcripts in order to withhold the participants' identities.

In addition to respecting the subjects' privacy and anonymity as well as acquiring informed consent, there are several other issues to consider. One important question is to take into account what harms to life, career, or reputation may occur from the research (see Markham and Buchanan, 2012: 10) and how to protect the subjects from these situations. Markham (2018: 19) stresses the importance of considering ethics as moment-by-moment choices that have consequences for people. In this approach, the focus is on responsibility as not just a legal placement but a moral one: the greater the vulnerability of our subjects, the greater our responsibility and obligation to protect them from likely harms (Markham, 2018: 19). After one of the interviews with an influencer, I believed that the participant may have ended up discussing issues she would rather have kept silent about. Luckily these particular issues were not the interest of my study. Moreover, the social media storm analysed in the second article involved personal attacks and public online shaming of a Finnish celebrity. During

the data collection period, the celebrity in question passed away. Deceased research subjects can have posthumous interests that are significant for research ethics, and the situation forced me to think over my approach and analysis of the debate. Since I was no longer able to interview the person himself, I needed to be particularly careful in my handling of his treatment in the (social) media.

Finally, despite all efforts, assessments of risk might later turn out to be inadequate. Once the research has been published, there is still the question of the kinds of effects the study may have and on whom. Research publications can have harmful consequences if the participants feel that the results are presented disrespectfully. I have done my best to avoid this by engaging in dialogue with the research subjects, as well as with my colleagues, and reflecting on my choices throughout the study.

IV Findings

In order to analyse the affective appeal and power of social media in the context of contemporary motherhood in Finland, I have set out to find out how affect drives mothers together and pulls them apart and what affects do when circulating in social media.

Next, I revisit the findings reported in the individual articles. Each subsection is named after a research question, and the findings shed light on the main research problem, which is somewhat larger and more complex than its distinct parts as presented in the papers. Drawing together the most important findings and arguments, I highlight the ideas that I consider to be integral in drawing conclusions (Chapter V) about the affective power of social media.

The corpus of this work is in the research articles. The studies can be read individually, but together they form an interconnected understanding of the main research problem, and I encourage the reader to familiarize themselves with the articles before continuing with this chapter.

4.1 How do mommy blogs mobilize their readers affectively?

To answer the first sub-question, I investigated the figure of *bad mother* in two popular Finnish mommy blogs. My close analysis of rhetorical strategies (irony, sarcasm, confession) also contributes to the main overarching question by discovering further, more specific, knowledge about the ways affect engages mothers in social media discussions about the norms of parenting.

To understand the appeal of bad mother performances in relation to the contemporary experience of parenting in Finnish settings, I asked how two popular Finnish mommy blogs mobilize their readers affectively. What ideas in the culture do their texts about bad motherhood combine, and how are the bloggers' personal narratives predicated on more general culturally constructed ideas about motherhood? And how does affect drive mothers together and pull them apart, and what does it do when circulating in these blog discussions?

The badness discussed here is highly ambiguous. Through the example of *Project Mama* and *Lähiömutsi* (Suburban Mom), I show that blogs have particular cultural

orientations that shape the background against which the bad mother figure is read. Representations of motherhood can take on various and sometimes even contradictory meanings depending on who is talking and in what context. In my study, the social media debates and negotiations around the bad mother figure operate within normative social boundaries as the parenting transgressions framed as “bad” are relatively mild. Topics such as breastfeeding or how much quality time is spent with one’s children may appear menial, but they retain a powerful hold over women. That is, the social media discussions should be read in the context of an intensive parenting culture that expects predominantly mothers to devote large amounts of time and energy to their children. As discussed earlier, while practices of knowledge-intensive parenting in theory concern fathers too, it is still mostly mothers who are seen as responsible for making the right decisions (Hays, 1996; Mäkinen, 2020: 2).

That said, it is undeniable that the ideology of intensive motherhood is primarily only attainable for economically-advantaged, privileged women (Abetz and Moore, 2018: 268), and the dominant views of motherhood here are challenged from the confines of basically normative social locations (cf. Friedman, 2013: 71). Being open about one’s failures and negative feelings as a parent is certainly only a safe approach for those mothers who already possess a great deal of social capital, as mothers who come from marginalized social locations are under greater scrutiny. Single mothers, disabled mothers, queer mothers, racialized mothers, and mothers who live in poverty are more forcefully surveilled and, as a result, are likely less inclined to perform “bad” motherhood. (Friedman, 2018: 176.) In other words, one’s social standing or respectability (Skeggs, 1997) has to be strong enough to have their message interpreted in a positive way. Furthermore, as social media influencers, not only can these women perform “bad” motherhood without repercussions, but they essentially profit from doing so.

Popular parenting influencers play an important role in the cultural construction of motherhood, and their texts reveal structures of feeling that reflect different ways of thinking present at a certain time in history (see Illouz, 2014: 21; Williams, 1975). The airing of negative feelings can feel liberating, but affective attachments to online exchanges are temporary. While affective confessions and ironic criticisms imply an opportunity to recognize the structures of normative motherhood, paradoxically, resistance to cultural norms can also result in a strengthening of the very views it opposes as resistance suggests “recognition of their centrality” (Illouz, 2008: 31). By discussing their parenting transgressions that appear mild and framing them as “bad”, mommy bloggers and their readers hold on to the demands of intensive motherhood. These blog debates include the sharpening of affect and the flattening of different kinds of mothers into types (cf. Paasonen, 2015a). As discussions and debates circulate from social media to everyday talk, mothers find themselves being criticized both for absorbing the norms and expectations of intensive parenting and for rejecting them.

My analysis shows how the bloggers utilize the “bad mother” figure that gives voice to frustrations with the dominant ideology of intensive motherhood while simultaneously continuing to present a version of motherhood that is affective and polarizing. The discussions circulate around key issues regarding the identities of good and bad mothers, and the figure of the bad mother reflects but also simplifies complicated, structural issues that affect motherhood. Through rhetorical strategies of irony, sarcasm, and confession, the bloggers studied offer the figure of the bad mother as a “cultural fantasy” (see Illouz, 2014: 30). While the blogs might not be able to dismantle the myth of the perfect mother, the figure of a bad mother can be seen as an attempt to make sense of the frictions, complexities, and contradictions generated by the discussions around contemporary parenting culture in Finland. In other words, actively distancing themselves from what is perceived as respectable in the context of contemporary Finnish motherhood can be seen as a form of coping. With their texts, the bloggers work through ambiguities that are under constant revision.

My analysis contributes to the main research question by demonstrating how the bad mother figure works as an affective tool that both pulls mothers together and pushes them apart. When traditional notions of good motherhood are challenged in the blogs, it is done within a framework in which the supposedly “bad” mothers actually remain “good”. In other words, bad becomes the new good, while the figure of motherhood remains both affective and polarized.

4.2 How are affective body politics articulated in social media?

The second article, which analyses the public social media breastfeeding debate, contributes to the main research problem of mothers’ affective engagements by turning the focus on affective body politics. Following Ahmed (2004: 195), I look into on how “language works as a form of power in which emotions align some bodies with others, as well as stick different figures together, by the way they move us”.

The study considers how and why the corporeal aspects of social media matter and demonstrates how the particular affordances of different platforms make it easier for users to engage and express their sentiments. The examination of the power of hashtags and images in mobilizing motherhood as a site of political agency addresses affect as intensities that give shape to relations between human and nonhuman bodies. It examines the debate, framing it as “an issue of dynamic human and nonhuman liveliness” where the boundaries of subjects and objects, events, and media are hard to tell apart (Kember and Zylinska, 2012: 13; Paasonen, 2021: 16).

On Instagram, the #teriniitti hashtag enabled a group of people unknown to one another to appear as a united front and deploy motherhood as a political force. Instagram’s connective practices were essential to providing a platform and the tools for women to share personal stories, and the creative use of images and hashtag(s)

as “affective mechanisms” (Papacharissi, 2014) enabled them to comment on a larger cultural atmosphere concerning female embodiment. Drawing on Papacharissi’s analysis of affective Twitter publics (2014), I argue that Instagram’s hashtag practices facilitated the affective engagement of participants in connection with #teriniitti and illustrated the role of social media in fostering connective action. That is, the connective practices of social media involvement in the debate allowed the participants to comment on public breastfeeding through their connected yet at the same time individual positions.

Throughout this thesis, social media are approached from a variety of angles that discuss networked parenting culture but also consider the affective dimensions and dynamics of social media more broadly. Although the incident served as a rallying point around which to defend nursing mothers’ rights, it concurrently demonstrated how in online debates, rational argumentation and negotiation are often sidelined. The examination of the Vauva.fi discussion forum’s particular affordances accounts for the stickiness of individual comments and reveals a fascination with the sexual and the intimate. The close analysis of the discussion forum thread shows how certain marginalized bodies are subject to sustained scrutiny and how hierarchical lines are drawn between them.

The stickiest comments were often those that were linked to sexuality or, in many cases, contained obscene language. That is, they received many responses and were furiously up- or downvoted. The discussion forum thread on the incident makes evident the multitude of ways in which bodies are politicized as their gendered and sexualized features are woven into mediated discourses. The affective dynamics of the case made visible how intensities stick to both gay male and lactating female bodies as objects of disgust, fascination, and desire.

My analysis of the social media storm supports the premise that while the role of sociocultural context in shaping the consequences of digital connections is essential (see Papacharissi, 2014: 122), social media discussions are mainly driven by a search for affective intensity (Dean, 2015). These intensities of feeling are ambiguous as they stick users tightly together in sharing personal stories but also in joint public shaming and hate. While the incident demonstrates many identifiable characteristics of social media parenting discussions, the intense gush of feeling was characteristic of a typical social media chain reaction in which publicity is difficult to control and where different discourses collide. Studying the flows of these intensities adds to the understanding of the affective and cultural power of social media connectivity that this dissertation focuses on.

Findings from the sub-study specifically contribute to the main research problem by demonstrating what affect does when travelling, amplifying, and fading in social media. The Instagram posts and a discussion forum thread showed that as different social media sites feed one another and different audiences are invited to join the narrative, affective responses intensify and accumulate. The waves of feeling circulating

around #teriniitti increased the affective value of both, the lactating and gay bodies. These bodies took shape and grew sticky through this continuous circulation. The process makes evident how and why certain bodies are excluded, marginalized, or threatened. Analysing the affective body politics of the debate demonstrates how social media discussions shape and channel the norms of motherhood, gender, and sexuality.

4.3 How do influencer mothers negotiate the feeling rules that govern maternal femininity and attempt to cope with the emotional weight of social media work?

To further understand the ambivalent nature of mediated connections, the third article focuses on social media lifestyle influencers whose work is based on their abilities to engage their followers affectively. To better understand the emotional work that this requires, I analyse the ways in which Finnish influencer mothers produce selves that are agreeable to their followers, decrease the discrepancy between their felt emotions and cultural expectations, and at the same time convert their anxiety into relatable social media performance.

Based on an examination of how the study participants articulate their experiences, it appears that the feeling rules regulating motherhood intensify the pressures of social media work. As mothers and lifestyle influencers, the participants are followed primarily by other women, many of whom are also mothers, and as result, they often find themselves debating the cultural norms of motherhood in their digital estates. The feeling rules (Hochschild, 2003 [1983]) governing normative motherhood become visible particularly when the women discuss their followers' attitudes towards their life choices. At the same time, the value of the brands that influencer mothers build is strongly based on relatability as a form of ordinariness. The influencers must work to brand themselves as ordinary by creating an idea of common experience that suggests generality to an unknown audience (see Kanai, 2019: 3–4; Pedwell, 2014). The interviewees in this study operate in a geographically, culturally, and linguistically small area where white, middle-class heterosexual motherhood is still positioned as general and is therefore often assumed to be relatable.

While discussing their motherhood can function as an important claim for ordinariness (also Mäkinen, 2018), the study participants are ridden with ambivalent negotiations about anxieties and uncertainties within their constructions of the relatable influencer (mother) identity. I suggest that the *affective practice of anxiety*, my elaboration of Wertherell's (2012) notion 'affective practice', can be seen as a response to this ambivalence. The notion serves as a theoretical concept in understanding the affective styles of influencer mothers—that is, the different ways in which they express and mobilize emotion. Viewing anxiety as an affective practice allows me

to delve into the suppressive and productive possibilities of this highly ambivalent emotion in relation to influencer work.

Anxiety can be seen as a negative side effect of the psychologically taxing nature of online communication (cf. Duffy and Schwartz, 2018: 2981), but it also operates as a push to govern the self in order to produce audience commonality. This connects to new organizations of digital labour where it is still largely a women's burden to transform by working on their own selves—by monitoring their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours (see Orgad, 2019: 33). Emotions that seem raw and unfiltered show social media performance as real, ordinary, and authentic (Abidin, 2017; Berryman and Kavka, 2018; Grindstaff, 2002). The interviewees acknowledge the need for intimate revelations and expressions of vulnerability: when one strives to remain both relatable and aspirational (cf. Duffy and Hund, 2015), anxiety becomes a kind of capital—a tool for visibility. Given the influencers' specific status as mothers, the anxiety they articulate is firmly tied to their efforts to manage the continuous strain of having their motherhood publicly evaluated. Since parenting influencers are not just offering advertising space but selling interactions (Taylor 2016: 119), the sharing of these anxieties is productive of capital.

The appropriate balance in the context of influencer performance requires the management of a wide range of feelings. While the sharing of a certain amount of vulnerability is expected, influencer women must still be able to generate engaging content that is not too overbearing. Drawing on Vik Loveday's (2018) analysis of the "neurotic academic", I propose that the construction of an entrepreneurial influencer self is underpinned by anxiety. This argument is formulated through the figure of the "neurotic influencer" that is the embodiment of the ambiguous nature of gendered influencer work. The "neurotic influencer" is an entrepreneurial figure that is governed through anxiety while being expected to take responsibility for the self-management of this anxiety (Loveday, 2018: 162). From this point of view, sharing the affective practices of anxiety can be interpreted as a *tactic* through which the influencers perform feelings by either following the feeling rules or by challenging but also capitalizing on them. The figure of the neurotic influencer is materialized in particular in what it means to be an influencer mother as it connects with the popular Finnish cultural perception of good mothers as strong survivors (Berg, 2008; Jokinen, 1996; Katvala, 2001).

By discussing both performative anxiety and the vulnerability that visibility can bring, the third article contributes to the main research question by showing what circulating affects such as anxiety *do* (Ahmed, 2004: 4; Loveday, 2016: 1148) and how these affects have the ability to both draw followers in and push them away. As one of the participants of this study describes, the followers who enter influencers' social media spaces are expecting to feel a certain way themselves. While the sharing of a certain amount of negative affect is expected to attract followers, influencer mothers must still be able to generate content that keeps them engaged. The influencers work

to pull mothers in, but the digital landscape of motherhood is a complex and contentious terrain of ambivalent affective intensities and contradictions.

4.4 How do mothers make sense of their experiences of parenting content and the affective intensities connected to it?

In the final article of this dissertation, my co-author Susanna Paasonen and I bring together two strands of discussion connected to ambiguity: that exploring social media and that focusing on parenting—and, more specifically, on mothering. The ambiguity is examined through the analytical lenses of *experience*, *evaluation*, and *tactics* in order to unpack how it is articulated and made sense of in the diaries of social media use and follow-up interviews with six women in different stages of motherhood.

The narrations of mixed feeling are retrospective interpretations of intensities felt. Despite the limitations of the type of micronarratives studied here, such personal accounts are among the only accessible means for empirically tackling affectation and intensity as they become registered (Paasonen, 2015b: 703). Our research material offers vignettes into both the ambiguous, affective power of social media and the ways in which parenting norms, expectations, and ideals are resisted, negotiated, and lived with. These stories of motherhood in relation to engaging with networked parenting culture connects directly to the main research question concerning the pull of social media. The diaries and follow-up interviews describe women as engaging with platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and blogs being the most used among them—within shifting intensities of irritation, amusement, anxiety, boredom, anger, happiness, joy, and pleasure. In these accounts, affective intensities also give way to broader judgements made of networked cultures of mothering and of the role of social media in everyday life.

Our research material is descriptive of how mothers engage with platforms and parenting debates even while having multiple reservations about them. Such orientations are simultaneously about connections and distances and guarded, reflexive tactics of participation. The appeal of social media is often such that absolute or binarized notions fail to make sense (see also Cassidy, 2016). Like the routines of everyday life more broadly, affective engagements with online parenting discussions are ambiguous while also being specifically patterned by the engagement options, social conventions, and information architectures of the platforms used.

The women reflect on affective ambiguity, regarding it as that which is liked and disliked, perhaps simultaneously so—as that which amplifies negative affect and, consequently, gives rise to hesitant and reserved tactics of use. Discussing their practices of “hate-following” and “force-liking” and their “wonderfully passive-aggressive” reactions to posts that irritate them, the study participants address pleasures taken

in sensations of dislike. Also, despite the persistent negativity involved in engaging with parenting content, the women maintain the very same social media connections that infuriate, irritate, and frustrate them as these also generate positive affect. All the while, anticipated hurt and vulnerability haunts their networked engagements. It is this lingering unease and the ambivalent affects that motivate the women's participation in networked parenting culture that is particularly pertinent in considering the larger research problem of my work. By asking how affect drives mothers together and pulls them apart, we remain open to complexity and ambiguity of lived social media experiences.

Furthermore, in taking ambiguity as the theoretical frame, our study encapsulates and deepens one of the most important methodological choices of this work: working with small, rich datasets helps the understanding of the complex and elusive experiences and practices and the ambivalent affective intensities of living with networked media. Here, affect is part of how the value of social media becomes perceived in routines of everyday life, as well as that which is key to attaching users to sites, discussions, and social connections. We suggest that the ambiguities addressed in our research material speak to something broader than the specific experiences of our participants. Rather, we argue for the necessity of focusing on, and working through affective ambiguity in uses of social media in order to gain a fuller understanding of the intensities that drive their uses and impact the bodies of users in different ways.

V Conclusions

*Now what about the things I've learnt
I stare at the blue sky
Potatoes getting burnt
I can't explain
But nothing seems too far away*

– Jenny Wilson, *Strings of Grass*, 2009

Throughout this thesis, my aim has been to consider questions of affect as a way of understanding the deeply ambiguous attachments to social media parenting culture. I have looked at mothers' affective interactions and practices in everyday digital life and discussed what they might mean in the broader cultural and social context of contemporary Finland. Most of all, I have strived to remain open to the ambiguity of the material studied (Paasonen, 2011: 136) and to embrace the affective complexity of the social media landscape of my inquiry.

The topics of the individual studies comprising this research range from bad motherhood in mommy blogs to the affective dynamics of social media discussions on affective body politics. They explore influencer mothers' routinized emotional behaviour and analyse everyday encounters with parenting content among mothers. Through these studies, I argue that it is the diverse, complex, and ambiguous affective intensities of social media, saturated by cultural norms of motherhood, that make networked parenting culture engaging. By researching the traces, signs, and interpretations of these lingering intensities, it is possible to better understand the experiences of mothers living in contemporary datafied culture. These affective mechanisms both connect users and disrupt connections, and they are experienced and utilized by social media influencers and ordinary users alike.

I further argue that the multi-layered affective experiences, rhythms, and intensities of networked parenting culture addressed in this dissertation speak of something more than social media motherhood. The topics of the individual studies tackle multiple modes of affective engagement and show how different platforms, discussion chains and debates attract and engage users and organize sociality in various ways, allowing for a range of affective experiences. In other words, while the social media

influencers and mommy bloggers engage and mobilise their followers through different affective tactics, the affective appeal of platforms like Instagram is key to the dynamics that guide our attention and connect users together.

The research provides micronarratives of subjectively experienced social media engagement and sheds light on the affective dynamics and tensions of social media discussions at a certain time in a certain place. While the experiences of relatively privileged women living in the Global North do not function as common templates of online motherhood, I suggest they are still illustrative of the affective power of networked media. They communicate the multiple ways social media shape our ways of feeling and making sense of the world. As such, they challenge the macro-structural accounts concerning networked lives and point to the need to focus on qualitative methodological granularity, which provides deep, rich, and contextual insights into the dynamics and impacts of social media. Understanding how affects are circulating in networked media also furthers our understanding of how affect works and what it does in our encounters with the world. Lived experiences in contemporary datafied culture are made of contradictions and ambiguities. This dissertation attends to that.

The developments examined here are ongoing. The phenomena discussed have transformed a great deal since I started this work, but with any luck, the threads of my excitement for studying these social media experiences weave together theoretical and methodological practices that offer points of entry for other researchers intrigued by the digitally-saturated social life. To conclude, I will briefly reflect on both—the potential methodological limitations and offerings of this work.

This is not a study carried out with detachment. My own experiences filter my focus and interpretation. This might be considered a limitation by some, but I stand behind my embodied, subjectively located viewpoint that I consider to be an inevitable in any cultural analysis. Keeping with Haraway's (1998) idea of situated knowledges and answerability, I maintain that one's own position or experience does not take away the ability to produce objective knowledge. Instead, it situates that knowledge in a particular subject position. Feminist objectivity allows us "to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (Haraway, 1998: 583). From this point of view, my research position should be viewed as a critical perspective born through experience.

Furthermore, as a contextual critique of the contemporary, the viewpoint here is very specific. The lack of diversity stems from certain methodological choices discussed earlier (see Chapters 1 and 3), but it also relates to how my interest has shifted as my thinking developed. First of all, while the choice of writing an article-format dissertation allowed adaptation of my perspectives and methodologies to move along with the constantly changing landscape of social media, it also resulted in a certain level of fragmentation and a sense of urgency in data collection. In other words, instead of working on one specific field for a longer period of time, the active planning and data collection stages for each article were relatively short. Future research

is needed to examine the ambiguous affects of networked parenting culture and the vulnerability that visibility can bring from the point of view of nonbinary and trans parents, as well as parents who experience other forms of marginalization placing them at even greater distances from the norms of intensive parenting discussed in this thesis.

Finally, focusing on the Finnish context can be viewed as a limitation. Finland is small Nordic welfare state with a comprehensive maternity and child health-care system. We are also one of the world's most connected countries, with 96 percent of households having access to broadband internet (Niinimäki, 2021); hence our circumstances are very specific indeed. On the other hand, the confines of the field are based on decisions the researcher must make, and studying digitally-saturated social life means that the boundaries of the field keep moving regardless (Markham, 2020: 10). Focusing on such an internet-intensive country also offers a prolific context for investigating how people make sense of their digital selves and experience their connections with others on social media.

Ultimately, to understand the affective appeal of social media and digital media in everyday life, I find it crucial to think about body–mind relations in a way that “complicate(s) rather than erases demarcation between the two” (Barnacle, 2009: 28). The internet has become mobile and embodied (Markham, 2020: 11), and the attachment to networked media is a part of the routines of everyday life that bore and irritate, just as they offer instances of affective intensity of the enlivening kind, often both at once (Paasonen, 2020b: 15). We all receive messages from parts of our bodies reflecting “enfleshed knowledge” (Spry, 2001) as we perform in the most mundane of daily activities (Ellingson, 2017: 70). Following this line of thought, I have thought a lot about my own embodied digital life. Like how there was a time when I would experience sharp visceral anxiety and uneasiness in my stomach just on hearing a notification from Wilma, the official app Finnish schools use to communicate about children's actions. Or the intense shame rushing through my body after encountering an overly emotional Facebook post I wrote many years ago. And then there was that moment of stumbling across an old forgotten tune from my childhood that someone had uploaded on YouTube. The song hit its crescendo, and a shiver went down my spine.

My final thoughts are a further invitation to embrace moments like this: the small, ambivalent stories about the complexities of embodied quotidian life in the era of social media. I believe there is a growing need for qualitative research that offers insights into the highly ambivalent experiences of contemporary datafied life. Such research helps to critically evaluate the macro-level narratives of networked connectivity as they are deployed in both academic and public discourses. Attending to the vague, ephemeral “messiness of the experiential” (Ahmed, 2010: 22; see also Law, 2004) is to appreciate where politics take shape, from the bottom up, and this impact cannot be predicted or generalized (Paasonen, 2020b: 26). Given the multi-layered

nature of affective experiences of being online, strong theories focusing solely on macro-structural accounts fail to deliver. I invite readers to think about the ideas offered in this work but also to question them and further imagine ways of doing qualitative social media research that will foster critical but empathetic engagement with the world.

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Appendix 1

Statement of the doctoral candidate's individual input in co-authored journal article to be included in an article-based dissertation.

Lehto, Mari and Paasonen, Susanna (2021) "I feel the irritation and frustration all over the body": Affective ambiguities in networked parenting culture. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. (forthcoming)

The undersigned jointly acknowledge Mari Lehto as the first author of the co-authored article accepted for publication in the peer-reviewed academic journal *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. Lehto's individual input is as follows:

- Collecting and transcribing the data consisting of diaries (16 pages) of social media use and follow up-interviews (34 pages) with six participants
- 50 % of the conducting contextual literature review and developing the argument on the affective ambiguity in social media within the context of online parenting cultures
- 50 % of the qualitative analysis of the research material through the analytical lenses of experience, evaluation and tactics in order to unpack how it is articulated in the research data and what the study participants make of it
- Percentual breakdown of Lehto's total authorial responsibility: 70 %

Turku & Helsinki, 8.4.2021



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